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House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. SALAZAR).

DESIGNATION OF THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
July 12, 2007.

I hereby appoint the Honorable JOHN T. SALAZAR to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

NANCY PELOSI,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

PRAYER

Rabbi Ellen S. Wolintz-Fields, Congregation B'nai Israel, Toms River, New Jersey, offered the following prayer:

Ruler of the Universe, bless our leaders with an understanding and discerning mind, a listening ear, a compassionate heart, and insightful thoughts.

We thank You, O God, for enabling us to live in a free country, and we remember those who do not yet live in freedom. We pray that the leaders of our country help those who suffer in the hands of others and come to the assistance of those held in captivity. We thank You God for the confidence the constituents place in their elected leaders.

This week in many communities, we conclude the reading of the Book of Numbers, the end of the desert journey of the Israelites. We learn from their example that life is a journey. Let us make each day meaningful, different than the one before, helping others, and moving towards a life of peace and freedom.

We ask God's blessings upon the men and women who serve in the House of Representatives: may God bless you and guard you. May God show you favor and be gracious to you. May God show you kindness and grant you peace. And let us all say, Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to clause 1, rule I, I demand a vote on agreeing to the Speaker's approval of the Journal.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the Speaker's approval of the Journal.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8, rule XX, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Will the gentleman from Texas (Mr. LAMPSON) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. LAMPSON led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

WELCOMING RABBI ELLEN S. WOLINTZ-FIELDS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SAXTON) is recognized for 1 minute.

There was no objection.

Mr. SAXTON. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take this opportunity to acknowledge the occasion of Rabbi Ellen Wolintz-Fields serving as today's guest chaplain. After that opening prayer, I might say that it is easy to see why our community is so graciously and well served by the rabbi. Her 3-year-old daughter, Cameron Elizabeth, is also with us here today, and we want to welcome her here as well.

The opportunity for having visiting chaplain guests is very special as it allows religious leaders from different faiths to begin our day of legislative duty.

On August 1, Rabbi Wolintz-Fields will celebrate her first anniversary as rabbi of Congregation B'Nai Israel in Toms River, New Jersey. Since 1950, this synagogue has served as a place of worship and guidance for teachings of Conservative Judaism while offering multiple support and volunteer services for our community. Today, the rabbi has over 400 families in her congregation.

Throughout her time both studying and serving, the rabbi has received various awards and recognitions for her contributions to preserving the Jewish faith. She is a recipient of the Goldstein Prize for Jewish History and the Rosalyn Gooen Milians Education Award.

While she has numerous noteworthy achievements, the Rabbi is particularly proud of her family. She is married to Jonathan Fields and, in addition to Cameron Elizabeth, they have a 1½-year-old son, Coby Dov.

I appreciate the rabbi taking time from her busy schedule to visit Washington, DC in order to give the opening prayer in the people's House, and I am glad I had the occasion to assist her to do so.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair will entertain up to 10 requests for 1-minute speeches on each side of the aisle.

RESPONSIBLE DEPLOYMENT FROM IRAQ ACT

(Mr. BLUMENAUER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, today we take another step in ending the war in Iraq as we consider the measure to withdraw our troops by next April.

Each day, support for President Bush's war crumbles as evidence mounts of the cost of this debacle: $10 billion a month, more lives lost, and thousands of hopes and dreams shattered.

We who opposed this war from the start for the reasons played out every day on the front pages of our newspapers understand that the redeployment of 200,000 American soldiers and contractors in Iraq will take some time to implement, but that is no excuse not to start now as rapidly and responsibly as possible to get our people out of the crossfire of this religious civil war. They have done all that they can, all that we should expect of them.

I call on the doubters in Congress to stop enabling the President; instead, to join us in supporting the strongest, most direct measure possible, not just to send the President a message, but to rein him in and bring our soldiers home from this nightmare.

THE GLOBAL WAR ON TERRORISM

(Mr. WILSON of South Carolina asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, in the past weeks terrorists with possible al Qaeda ties have attempted car bombings in London. Following these failed attempts, terrorists struck the Glasgow, Scotland airport. This attack by two doctors in a flaming Jeep Cherokee, doctors who have been sworn to protect life, were arrested for attempting mass murder by incineration of innocent civilians.

In addition, terrorists held children captive in a mosque in Islamabad, Pakistan; and an al Qaeda homicide bomber in Yemen murdered seven Spanish tourists and two Yemeni guides while they were visiting a temple of the ancient Queen of Sheba.

Recent events such as this should alert Americans that the global war on terrorism is a worldwide threat and that Iraq and Afghanistan remain the central front of the battle as claimed by bin Laden's spokesman Zawahiri.

Instead of practicing party politics, Congress should rely on the leadership of our military leaders such as General David Petraeus. By stopping terrorists overseas, our troops are protecting America's families at home.

In conclusion, God bless our troops, and we will never forget September 11th.

REBUILDING A NEW VA HOSPITAL IN NEW ORLEANS

(Mr. JEFFERSON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. JEFFERSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise to thank Chairman BOB FILNER and members on his House Committee on Veterans' Affairs for holding a field hearing in New Orleans on this past Monday on the subject of rebuilding a new VA hospital in the greater New Orleans area.

The VA has narrowed its search for the location of a new VA hospital to a downtown New Orleans site and to a site in the adjoining Jefferson Parish. For reasons of taking advantage of the synergies of the relationship of Tulane and LSU medical schools to the new VA hospital and because of the savings and long-term operational costs that can be realized, I and several of the panelists recommended the New Orleans site as most beneficial to the care of our veterans.

Mr. Speaker, in the end it is important that we put our veterans first. When we have called on them to serve our country, they have not asked us to wait. They have responded to our Nation's call to duty at great risk to themselves and to their families. Nearly 2 years after Hurricane Katrina struck, we have already asked them to wait far too long. It is now time to build a world-class, state-of-the-art VA hospital in downtown New Orleans and to do so in the shortest possible time. We call on the Veterans Administration to do just that.

GLOBAL WAR ON TERROR

(Mrs. BLACKBURN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, today we will see another attempt by the liberal majority leadership to drive a stake between the American people and the brave men and women fighting in the global war on terror. Today's latest attempt is called a precipitous withdrawal. The American people would label it a cut and run. Our soldiers deserve the confidence of their leaders, not second-guessing arrogance by politicians half a world away.

The leadership thinks Iraq is lost, despite the fact that the new mission has shown signs of progress, including the fact that half of Baghdad has been secured, the Baghdad Security Plan. General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker are going to provide us a progress report in September, but that is not fast enough for the liberal leadership. They expected the new strategy to win overnight. Don't they know that you don't find instant gratification in war?

One thing is certain: surrender and failure in securing Iraq hold catastrophic consequences for freedom, the U.S., and the Iraqi people. Surrender would send the wrong message. It will say the U.S. is weak, that roving death squads in the streets of Baghdad and ethnic cleansing are acceptable to us. It may be fashionable to want to pull out of Iraq, but it sends the wrong message.

WE OWE AN EXPLANATION TO THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

(Mr. SESTAK asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. SESTAK. I can be and am disappointed in this bill we will vote on today, intended to reduce U.S. troops in Iraq. It aims to begin the reduction, but leaves an unspecified limited presence of troops in Iraq by a deadline of April 1, 2008, a level of troops and their missions to be determined by President Bush.

It does no harm, but how much good? One might say it is a step in the right direction even with such significant limitations, but I have concern. Congress is, as it should be, close to ending this tragic misadventure; however, ending this war is necessary but insufficient. How we end it and by what means is of even greater importance for our troops' safety and our own security. A Congress intent upon mandating such a new security policy through force of law owes a careful explanation to the country why and how it is to be done, including dealing with what would occur in the aftermath. We don't do that here.

I will vote for this bill for it does no harm, perhaps some good. But I will do so reluctantly, for it does little to define the how and why within a strategic approach of a date within a year that we can redeploy from Iraq and leave behind the possibility of an unfailed Iraqi state. We owe such an explanation since it is us by force of law that will end this tragic misadventure.

DEMOCRATS SETTING RECORDS

(Mr. AKIN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. AKIN. Americans love to compete and to set records. In fact, people all over the world record their records in the Guinness Book of World Records. But there are some kinds of records called Darwin Awards for foolish behavior where people eliminate themselves by doing something unusual. One man took a pistol and decided to rob a gun store and got shot.

The Democrats are not using a pistol, but they have been setting some records. They have just set one this year, that is, the largest tax increase

in the history of this country. It comes out to about $290-some-billion. But that means to the average household a $3,000 tax increase. What household can absorb a $3,000 tax increase in just 1 year alone?

Unfortunately, that is not the only record being set by the Democrats. They have doubled that record in terms of how much money they have spent, over $800 billion, which would come to $6,000 per family. American people would be better if we didn't set records like that.

NASA ASTRONAUT SUNITA WILLIAMS

(Mr. LAMPSON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. LAMPSON. Mr. Speaker, it is truly a pleasure to rise today to acknowledge the achievements of NASA astronaut Sunita Williams.

On Friday, June 22, Sunita returned to Earth after spending 195 days in space. She now holds the record for the longest duration space flight by a woman. Also, after completing four space walks lasting a total of 29 hours, 17 minutes, she is a record holder for the most hours outside a spacecraft by a woman.

I was at the emotional STS–117 crew return welcome a few weeks ago at Johnson Space Center and saw firsthand how Sunita's achievements serve as an inspiration to so many young people, particularly young ladies, interested in pursuing their dreams of space exploration. She has shown them that if they work hard and are dedicated, they too can one day reach the stars.

□ 1015

THE CAUSE OF CLEANING UP CONGRESS HAS GROUND TO A HALT

(Mr. KIRK asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. KIRK. Mr. Speaker, despite promises that are only 6 months old, the cause of cleaning up the Congress has ground to a halt.

We should kill pensions for Members of Congress convicted of a felony. And after passing a shadow bill in January, this action has completely stalled. No action in February, March, April, May or June.

Now the real surprise. Despite promises of spending reform, Congressional leaders blocked efforts to stop funding the construction of the bridges to nowhere. That's right. Democratic leaders in Congress now support building the bridges to nowhere, one structure, connecting to an island with just 50 people, the other to an island with only 22, at a cost to the U.S. taxpayer of over $1 billion. Only 6 months into a new Congress, and now Congressional leaders do not want to kill pensions for Congressional felons, but do want to build the bridges to nowhere.

SCHIP

(Ms. SCHWARTZ asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. SCHWARTZ. Mr. Speaker, in 1992, I was proud to spearhead one of the first State initiatives to enable working families to purchase private health insurance for their children; 5 years later Congress passed the State Children's Health Insurance Program, SCHIP, enabling every State to implement its own plan.

Today 6 million American children have health coverage thanks to SCHIP. We in Congress are building upon the extraordinary success of SCHIP to extend it to almost 9 million American children who are now uninsured. The goal of insuring all American children is within our reach.

Yet, instead of working with Congress to reach this goal, the President this week made it clear that health insurance for children is not important to him.

Does the President really believe that America's children do not deserve quality ongoing health care? Does the President really believe that emergency rooms are the best place for primary care for children?

It is clear to just about every American that health insurance is expensive, and for too many American families, it is simply too expensive.

Congress recognizes the urgency of the situation, and we move ahead, unlike the President, to take this opportunity to cover every American child.

DALITS

(Mr. PITTS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, earlier this week I hosted a screening of a documentary entitled, ''India's Hidden Slavery,'' a film about contemporary slavery in India among the 250 million Dalits or untouchables.

The caste system has at the top the Brahmin or priestly class, the ruling class. That includes politicians. At the very bottom, not even considered a caste because they're too low, the Dalits. Today, in the world's largest democracy, an unknown hidden system exists with people without basic human rights.

In contrast to the economic progress in some sectors in Indian society, below the surface is a society still racked by caste, with millions suffering and held hostage to a social structure that reinforces segregation, poverty, injustice and slavery. Recently, village leaders just condemned to death a couple that married outside their caste.

While the government of India has taken some small steps to outlaw the caste system, in reality, it permeates every aspect of life there.

I commend India for its economic progress, but I urge government leaders to ensure that all people in India have basic human rights, and especially the 250 million Dalits.

THE IRAQ WAR

(Mr. HODES asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HODES. Mr. Speaker, the war in Iraq is in its fifth year, but the Bush administration still refuses to develop a realistic, strategic plan for the Middle East and Iraq.

The Iraq War has destabilized the region, and the United States must reassert and protect its fundamental national security interests by actively taking the necessary steps to stabilize the Middle East.

Today Congress will debate a plan which stands in stark contrast to the delusional policies of the Bush administration which have sapped our military readiness, strengthened al Qaeda, wasted our resources and betrayed the trust of the American people.

There is a way forward, and we must be bold, courageous and strategic. Without leadership in the White House, we must continue to exercise leadership in the people's House. And I assure the American people that we will.

MISSING OR CAPTURED AMERICAN SOLDIERS

(Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. You know, we shouldn't even be discussing surrender in Iraq today because 2 months ago today, three American soldiers were captured in Iraq. Tragically, the body of Private First Class Anzack was found a few days later in the river. DOD has changed the status of Specialist Jimenez and Private Fouty from unknown to missing/captured. Considering that the military found their IDs in an al Qaeda safe house, I'm sure they're being mistreated. And I hope and pray that they can stay alive until we can rescue them.

As a former prisoner of war for nearly 7 years in Vietnam, I know what these guys are going through. We must find them, and we must bring them home. Naysayers in Washington should not be talking about pulling the plug on our troops in Iraq when we have our own men missing in action who need to be rescued.

SCHIP

(Mr. ENGEL asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, in our Energy and Commerce Committee, we're

pushing ahead to grant health care coverage to millions of children, a program called SCHIP. Unfortunately, the President's proposal to reauthorize SCHIP is woefully inadequate. His funding level won't even cover the children currently enrolled in the program. Nationwide, 6 million children are covered by the SCHIP and another 9 million are uninsured. If there was ever a question of where our priorities are, it should be with strengthening and modernizing the SCHIP program.

I've just come from a meeting with our Governor, Eliot Spitzer. New York operates a separate stand-alone program under SCHIP, Child Health Plus. As of December 2006, nearly 400,000 children were enrolled and receiving comprehensive health coverage in the program. Our stand-alone SCHIP program has increased enrollment by over a quarter of a million children since the start of the program.

Nationwide, we have to remember that the SCHIP program is a critical part of our health care safety net, providing health coverage to more than 4 million low-income children who do not qualify for Medicaid. SCHIP has served New York and our country well, and I will continue to work to improve access for children's health care coverage.

ELIMINATING INFECTIONS FROM MEDICAL DEVICES

(Mr. TIM MURPHY of Pennsylvania asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. TIM MURPHY of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, at least half of all cases of hospital-acquired infections are associated with medical devices. These medical devices include items ranging from tongue depressors to catheters and heart valves.

These preventable infections infect 2 million patients per year and end up costing 90,000 lives and over $50 billion annually. These are unacceptable costs for patients, taxpayers and Congress.

Up to this moment this morning, we already have over 1 million cases, you can see on this chart, 47,000 deaths and a cost of over $26 billion, and that's just as of today.

Yesterday we passed the Medical Device User Fee Act which included an amendment in there that I placed in that allows for the government, the GAO, to study these issues. They note that even after rigorous cleaning and sterilization, virus and bacteria still exist on reused medical devices.

Manufacturers, providers and facilities should take measures to reduce the rate of infections. I urge my colleagues to refocus our Nation's health care system on patient choice, patient safety and patient quality and join me in working on these things together where we can save lives and save money for our Nation.

STRATEGIC RESET

(Ms. SCHAKOWSKY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, today I will vote for the Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act. I agree with the 70 percent of Americans who want our troops out of Iraq. And I agree with the comprehensive report called ''Strategic Reset'' from the Center for American Progress, written by three authors, one of whom is Lawrence Korb, former Assistant Secretary of Defense.

They write, ''The current Iraq strategy is exactly what al Qaeda wants, the United States distracted and pinned down by Iraq's internal conflicts, trapped in a quagmire that has become the perfect rallying cry and recruitment tool for al Qaeda. The United States has no good options, given the strategic and tactical mistakes made in Iraq since 2002, but simply staying the course with an indefinite military presence is not advancing U.S. interests.''

Today we will vote to change the course to bring our troops home by April of 2008. I will proudly vote in favor of that bill.

WAR IS NOT WON BY EVACUATION

(Mr. POE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. POE. Mr. Speaker: ''Many people think the best way to escape war is to dwell upon its horrors and to imprint them vividly upon the minds of the younger generation. They flaunt the grisly photographs before their eyes. They fill their ears with tales of carnage. They dwell on the ineptitude of generals and admirals. They denounce the crime and the folly of human strife.''

These words of Winston Churchill in 1934 stressed upon the people of Great Britain that the cynics, who don't believe some things are worth fighting for, should not have their way. They ignore the victories and accomplishments and, instead, focus upon setbacks.

War is hard. It has always been hard. Congress will once again debate a timetable retreat for American troops to leave Iraq. The timid will want to turn their back on the enemy and leave a desperate people and a nation floundering; all this because war is hard.

Retreat tells the enemy that if they wait America out, we will bow out of the fight.

Mr. Speaker, Churchill also remarked, ''war is not won by evacuation.''

And that's just the way it is.

WORK-FAMILY POLICIES

(Mrs. MALONEY of New York asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, a new report that just came out by the Government Accountability Office shows that the United States lags far behind other industrialized countries in providing policies that help families balance the competing demands of work and family responsibilities.

Critics argue that implementing such policies here could have a negative impact on the economy, but many countries with strong work-family policies are among the world's most competitive economies in the world and have unemployment rates that are the same or lower than the United States.

More and more businesses are finding that doing right by workers is good for the bottom line. Paid parental and sick leave, flexible work schedules and access to child care provide a boost to worker productivity, retention, and recruitment that outweigh the cost of implementing such policies.

U.S. workers, businesses, and the economy would benefit from stronger work-family policies.

''A copy of the GAO report is available on the JEC website at http://www.jec.senate.gov/Documents/Hearings/06.14.07%20Work-Life%20Balance/GAO%20-%20Kay%20Brown%20Testimony%20--%20FINAL.pdf.''

THE GROWING ECONOMY

(Mr. WALBERG asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. WALBERG. Mr. Speaker, this week, news reports came out indicating our Federal budget deficit has continued to drop and our economy continues to grow due to tax relief policies passed by Congress in 2001 and 2003.

In spite of that good news, Democratic leadership in Congress is discounting advancements made possible by this tax relief by trying to slap U.S. taxpayers with a $400 billion tax increase that will slow our economy and its current progress.

Additionally, Democrats piled $6 billion in new spending onto January's omnibus budget bill to finish the 2007 appropriations process, passed a budget for 2008 that is $20 billion more than the President's budget request, and added billions in extra spending to the few appropriations bills the House has passed.

Raising taxes hurts American families, discourages innovation and hinders job creation. Let's work together in this Congress to make tax relief permanent and continue to grow our economy. Together, this Congress can foster further prosperity and build a better, brighter future for our country.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

A message in writing from the President of the United States was communicated to the House by Ms. Wanda Evans, one of his secretaries.

□ 1030

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 2956, RESPONSIBLE REDEPLOYMENT FROM IRAQ ACT

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 533 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 533

Resolved, That upon the adoption of this resolution it shall be in order to consider in the House the bill (H.R. 2956) to require the Secretary of Defense to commence the reduction of the number of United States Armed Forces in Iraq to a limited presence by April 1, 2008, and for other purposes. All points of order against the bill and against its consideration are waived except those arising under clause 9 or 10 of rule XXI. The bill shall be considered as read. The previous question shall be considered as ordered on the bill to final passage without intervening motion except: (1) four hours of debate, with three hours equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Armed Services and one hour equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Foreign Affairs; and (2) one motion to recommit.

SEC. 2. During consideration of H.R. 2956 pursuant to this resolution, notwithstanding the operation of the previous question, the Chair may postpone further consideration of the bill to such time as may be designated by the Speaker.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentlewoman from New York (Ms. SLAUGHTER) is recognized for 1 hour.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, for the purposes of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. DREIER). All time yielded during consideration of the rule is for debate only.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and to insert extraneous materials into the RECORD.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from New York?

There was no objection.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, H. Res. 533 provides for consideration of H.R. 2956, the Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act, under a closed rule. The rule provides 4 hours of debate, with 3 hours equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Armed Services and 1 hour equally divided and controlled by the Committee on Foreign Affairs. The rule waives all points of order against the bill and its consideration except those arising under clause 9 or 10 under rule XX. The rule provides for one motion to recommit.

Mr. Speaker, let's be very clear about what we will be told today by the President. We will be told that adequate progress has been made in some areas of Iraq but more work needs to be done in others. What this really means, of course, is that once again security and political benchmarks have not been met, that vast areas in Baghdad that were supposed to be under control by now are not, that a drop in violence in some areas has been met with increases in violence elsewhere, that political compromises are not being made with sufficient speed by the Iraqi leadership, nor is there any available evidence that the situation is going to change, that the escalation will suddenly become more effective next week or next month. Instead, all signs indicate that in September when General Petraeus reports to Congress, he will deliver the exact same message that we are hearing today: to be patient.

But patience means nothing when deadlines are constantly moved. In January a leading Member of the minority said that we would be able to tell in a few months if the escalation was working. Now we hear it is still too early to tell. It has been 7 months. Which prediction are we supposed to believe?

As time has advanced, an absence in progress has not been met by an absence in tragedy. At the present rates, between now and September, another 200 Americans will be killed, 200 more families changed forever. And hundreds, if not thousands, more innocent Iraqis will have died as well.

We will hear today that to change our course in Iraq will signal defeat. But this willfully ignores the entire history of the Iraq War. After more than 4 years of relentless conflict, including recent months of historically high troop numbers, experts tell us that in Iraq al Qaeda is stronger than ever. A military official told ABC News yesterday al Qaeda's ''operational capability appears to be undiminished.''

The conclusion is clear: The American military is not being given a chance to bring peace to Iraq or to fight our enemies, not because our troops are not good enough but because the current mission is inherently flawed.

It is not weakness to admit a strategy is not working and to change it. It is the very opposite: a sign of strength. Our leaders corrected failing courses when they arose during the Civil War and during World War II. Why should this war be different?

What Democrats are calling for today is not a retreat. It is not a surrender. It is a statement that Congress will not wait for another ambiguous so-called progress report and will not give the administration another chance to move the goalposts. Instead, we will refuse to needlessly sacrifice our soldiers, weaken our military, undermine our national security, and bleed our country in ways that even the worst terrorists could ever dream of. And it is a statement to the Iraqi people that they will no longer have to live as dual victims: victims of violence and victims of a flawed military strategy that is at best failing to bring peace to the country and at worst perpetuating their suffering.

The bill will refocus our troops on fighting terrorists. By doing so, the disastrous strain being placed on our Armed Forces will be lifted without sacrificing security objectives, and their healing can begin.

Second, it will remove a strategy from the playing field that is certainly not working and throw open the door to new approaches which may actually succeed. For example, the legislation requires the President to report by January on how he is engaging U.S. allies and regional powers in the effort to bring stability to Iraq. Far from abandoning the Iraqis or lessening American security, we will finally make the rehabilitation of Iraq the international priority that it must become. The only thing we will be abandoning, in other words, Mr. Speaker, is this administration's mistakes.

And to my friends on both sides of the aisle, yesterday I received an advance copy of a report from the Defense Department's Inspector General that will be made public today. It detailed the work of some of the first companies to make armored vehicles and armored kits for our soldiers in Iraq. They were given sole-source, unbid contracts even though senior defense officials objected, favoring a competitive process instead.

I hope people heard what I said. Senior officials at DOD wanted competitive bidding for these machines, but they were overridden by the Under Secretary of Defense.

The results were sadly predictable. The companies failed to meet demand and sent critically important equipment late. Some of the armor that our soldiers were sent had cracks that had simply been painted over to try to fool them instead of fixing it. In certain instances two left doors were sent for the same vehicle. Troops already fighting a deadly foe had to use their precious time and energy to improvise and come up with ways to turn useless equipment into something that could protect them.

Our soldiers have been asked to endure terrible hardships, as well have their families, some of which, I am ashamed to say, have been the direct result of the practices of this administration, and they are enduring them to this day and at this very hour. For Congress to leave them there, to ask them to continue fighting to survive under the mounting weight of a flawed mission—that, Mr. Speaker, is the true definition of abandonment. And after 4 years, Democrats are tired of this Congress abandoning our troops to a fate they have never deserved.

I would ask everyone in this Chamber how they would justify this continued carnage to the families of our soldiers. With all we know now, how can we still say to the children of those killed or to the young men and women maimed for life, your loss was needed?

We cannot. What we must say to them is this: You have given enough. It is time to come home.

The American people know what must be done and the majority of this Congress knows what must be done. And all that remains is for those of us here who are still opposed to this bill to decide that they too have had enough and that they will join their countrymen in voting not with the President but with the troops, with the people of Iraq, and with the people of the United States.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

(Mr. DREIER asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, here we go again. It has actually been several weeks now since we have had a meaningless vote on the issue of Iraq, and so I suppose we are overdue for another one. This Democratic leadership, Mr. Speaker, as we all know very well, still bereft of any real ideas, has been forced once again to resort to demagoguery, bringing up a bill that they know, they know full well, will not be enacted into law. And knowing that their proposal cannot withstand any critical scrutiny, they have once again shut down the process and brought this to us under a completely closed rule, not allowing any of the very thoughtful proposed alternatives to be considered whatsoever.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday in the Rules Committee, I offered an amendment that would have allowed us to have the opportunity to substitute their policy with the very thoughtful and responsible recommendations that were included in this bipartisan Iraq Study Group package of recommendations proposed by Mr. Baker and Mr. Hamilton, a group of Democrats and Republicans, very respected, authorized by this Congress. And they refused to allow us to have any opportunity whatsoever to even debate, much less vote, on the issue of the Iraq Study Group recommendations.

Now, just yesterday morning in an interview on National Public Radio, our former colleague Mr. Hamilton, who, as I said, was the co-Chairman of the Iraq Study Group, had a very eloquent and thoughtful interview on the need for us to implement the Iraq Study Group recommendations. Unfortunately, the Democratic leadership, I guess fearful that responsible policy would prevail and that this institution might, in fact, pass the measure calling for implementation of the Iraq Study Group, prevented us from having the chance to debate or vote on the Iraq Study Group recommendations.

The last time we went through this charade, they at least had the luxury of making dire predictions of failure for the new strategy in Iraq led by General Petraeus, and the distinguished Chair of the Committee on Rules once again basically talked about failure and said that we haven't met any benchmarks. Even then, Mr. Speaker, the strategy was actually showing early signs of success. But this time, this time, the counterinsurgency offensive is well under way and making clear and irrefutable progress.

I will say once again, Mr. Speaker, that we are seeing clear and irrefutable progress taking place. As one major newspaper recently editorialized, ''Demands for withdrawal are no longer demands to pull out of a deteriorating situation with little hope. They are now demands to end a new approach to this conflict that shows every sign of succeeding.''

Mr. Speaker, U.S. forces, working side by side with Iraqi Army and police forces, have penetrated enemy strongholds in the belt surrounding Baghdad and are driving them out. They have cut off al Qaeda's supply lines and transport routes. They are destroying car bomb factories. Sectarian deaths have plummeted. Al Qaeda operatives are finding themselves increasingly isolated, their safe havens destroyed, and their ability to move freely between neighborhoods severely diminished.

Mr. Speaker, our efforts have been significantly bolstered by former Sunni insurgents who have joined the fight against al Qaeda. I am going to say that again. Former Sunni insurgents have now joined our effort in the fight against al Qaeda. Nowhere has this process been more critical than in the al-Anbar province.

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Last year, a leaked Marine intelligence report conceded this province as completely lost. That was the report that came out. Today, Mr. Speaker, al-Anbar is our best success story, and a template for U.S. Forces working together with both Sunni police and Shia army forces to combat al Qaeda.

General David Petraeus, the man who has received bipartisan praise and was confirmed unanimously by a vote of 82–0 in the United States Senate as he began his work, he said to the New York Post, ''We are beginning to see a revolt of the middle against both extremes.''

Now, Mr. Speaker, it is our commanders on the ground who have repeatedly pointed out that the tipping point didn't come until the tribal leaders sought a prolonged offensive by U.S. and Iraqi forces.

Now, let's think back to what life was like in Iraq under Saddam Hussein. After a quarter-century reign of terror by Saddam Hussein, Iraqis clearly would not immediately rise up against any force until that force has been driven into retreat. We had to demonstrate our strength and our commitment before we earned the trust of the tribal leaders and their support in the fight against al Qaeda. That is exactly what we're doing today in Baghdad and the surrounding areas.

The New York Times recently reported on the Anbar success and how we are currently applying it to the fight to secure Baghdad. According to a July 8 report, former insurgents in Sunni neighborhoods of Baghdad are now taking up arms against al Qaeda. Now, that is July 8th, a report that came out just 4 days ago. Now, it quotes Petraeus as saying, ''Local security is helped incalculably by local support and local involvement.''

Now, Mr. Speaker, this success is so critical because it gets to the heart, it gets to the very heart of our twin goals in Iraq. First, that Iraqis will be able to provide their own security, that we have an increased ISF, the Iraqi Security Forces, and that they are trained adequately; and second, that this security will provide the environment that makes a political solution possible.

The quicker that Iraqis achieve security and a peaceful, stable democracy, the quicker our troops will come home. And as we listen to the speeches that will come following mine about the quest for our troops to come home, make no bones about it, I share the goal and the vision that is put forth by our friends, Mr. MCGOVERN and Ms. SLAUGHTER, and others, who will argue to bring our troops home. We all want to make sure that that happens.

Our new strategy, Mr. Speaker, has clearly brought us closer to that goal. And if our fight against extremism was not urgent enough, the Associated Press report that came out just late yesterday afternoon that al Qaeda's global network is again on the rise and has regained much of the strength that it had in September of 2001 is an important thing for us to recognize.

Mr. Speaker, as the terror network rebuilds and regroups, it seems absolutely preposterous that we would abandon not only a key front in the global war on terror, but a place where we have al Qaeda on the defensive and where we are diminishing their capabilities, especially in light of that report that came out just last night about their renewed strength. Yet, the Democratic leadership inexplicably wants to pull the rug out from under our military commanders. Well, Mr. Speaker, perhaps not so inexplicable if we consider that their planned withdrawal would be complete just in time for the 2008 elections.

But let's pretend that there is no election looming on the horizon here. Regardless of this bill's impact on American electoral politics, what would be the effects on Iraq? Now, Mr. Speaker, even the New York Times editorial board, which apparently doesn't often read its own news reports and is calling for an immediate withdrawal, acknowledges the inevitable dire consequences of its recommended course of action. In the very editorial calling for surrender, it outlines the overwhelming refugee and humanitarian crisis that would immediately ensue, how the fight would spill out all across the region. And Mr. Speaker, in the most callous way, it acknowledges the terror that would be inflicted upon

those Iraqis who worked with us because they believed our promises. How cold and cynical. How callous can we be to stand here and debate the notion of abandoning the Iraqi people, not only to genocide, but to the targeting of the very individuals who have bravely worked with us.

The Democratic leadership wants to wave a magic wand and make this war go away. I wouldn't mind a magic wand myself, and certainly the American people would appreciate a quick and tidy solution. But I'm afraid that this solution attempts to salvage nothing but party politics. The Iraqi people, Mr. Speaker, would not be quite so lucky.

Furthermore, NPR recently reported that the quick withdrawal time frame that the Democratic leadership dreamed up has no basis in reality. It would take a year or more to safely withdraw all U.S. troops from Iraq, and it would take significant combat forces to protect the withdrawal. We would have to fight our way out all the way to the Kuwaiti border. There simply is no magic wand in this war, Mr. Speaker.

Perhaps the greatest irony of this bill is that it calls for detailed reports for a strategy in Iraq. Mr. Speaker, we have a strategy, and while it was only fully operational less than 1 month ago, it is already succeeding. The Democratic leadership, in their absurdist logic, want our military to abandon their strategy, go home and write a report about what they would have wanted to accomplish if they had stayed. And if that weren't cruel enough, Mr. Speaker, they would have to watch terror and genocide unfold as they retreated. Now, I cannot fathom a more disastrous policy for our security or the Iraqis'.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to reject this rule and the underlying bill itself.

With that, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I would like to insert into the RECORD an article from the Washington Post this morning entitled, ''White House Isn't Backing Iraq Study Group Follow-Up,'' and points out that the House voted 355–69 last month to reestablish the study group, but the President is blocking it.

[From washingtonpost.com, July 12, 2007]

WHITE HOUSE ISN'T BACKING IRAQ STUDY GROUP FOLLOW-UP

(By Robin Wright)

Despite an overwhelming House vote last month to revive the Iraq Study Group, the White House has blocked reconvening the bipartisan panel to provide a second independent assessment of the military and political situation in Iraq, said several sources involved in the panel's December 2006 report.

Co-Chairman Lee H. Hamilton, several panel members and the U.S. Institute of Peace, which ran the study group, were willing to participate, according to Hamilton and the congressionally funded think tank. But the White House did not give the green light for co-chairman and former secretary of state James A. Baker III to participate, and Baker is unwilling to lead a second review without President Bush's approval, according to members of the original panel and sources close to Baker.

White House support is critical for any follow-up review. ''It is not likely to happen unless the White House approves it,'' Hamilton, a Democratic former congressman from Indiana, said in an interview. ''The group can't go ahead without its concurrence or acquiescence, as we need travel support and access to documents.''

The White House does not want independent assessments to rival the upcoming Sept. 15 reports by Gen. David H. Petraeus and Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker, U.S. officials said.

The White House indicated that it sees no need for an immediate follow-up to the report, noting that it is implementing a strategy consistent with many of the panel's recommendations. ''The next report due in September by General Petraeus must include an assessment of our objectives as they relate to Baker-Hamilton. September will be the appropriate time to determine how that strategy is progressing,'' said National Security Council spokesman Gordon Johndroe. ''We look forward to remaining in contact with members of the group.''

The House voted 355 to 69 last month to allocate $1 million for the U.S. Institute of Peace to reestablish the group of 10 prominent Republicans and Democrats, which included former Supreme Court justice Sandra Day O'Connor, former defense secretary William J. Perry and, until his appointment, Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates.

Congressional sponsors called the White House's reluctance a missed opportunity. ''The ISG provides an opportunity to bring the country together. . . . If you had a serious illness, you would want a second opinion. We are at war. You want to have the best minds looking at a problem,'' said Rep. Frank R. Wolf (R–Va.), who proposed the ISG and co-sponsored the bill to reconvene it. ''Having another independent, bipartisan assessment will take out the venom in the debate.''

Rep. Christopher Shays (R–Conn.), another co-sponsor, warned that the White House's move would cost further support among Republicans.

''It's really shortsighted,'' he said. ''It's going to further isolate the president. . . . You can't rely just on Petraeus and Crocker. They are good people, but they're still in the thick of battle and you need the view from the outside. The fact the White House doesn't want it indicates they are afraid of what the ISG might say.''

The White House did not initially embrace the ISG report. But it has gradually adopted key recommendations, including the controversial proposal to pursue diplomatic talks with Iran and Syria, the countries that have most aided or abetted Iraq's insurgents and illegal militias. Last month, 23 Democrats and 34 Republicans co-sponsored a House bill to implement all the ISG recommendations as the way forward in Iraq.

But other groups are pursuing independent reviews of U.S. policy and Iraq's performance. The Iraqi Security Forces Independent Assessment Commission—made up of 14 former generals and defense officials—is examining Iraqi military capabilities. The panel, which is mandated by Congress, is chaired by retired Gen. James L. Jones. The group is currently in Iraq; its report is due in October.

The Government Accountability Office is doing a separate congressionally mandated study on the 18 benchmarks set for the Iraqi government to meet. And the U.S. Institute of Peace is reconvening many of the experts the ISG originally relied on to discuss Iraq's future.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 4½ minutes to the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MCGOVERN).

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this rule and the underlying bill, H.R. 2956, the Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act.

Mr. Speaker, I believe this House ought to voice its gratitude to the distinguished chairman of the Armed Services Committee, Mr. SKELTON, for bringing before this House a thoughtful, responsible bill that outlines what we must do next in Iraq.

The bill clearly notes that our uniformed men and women have carried out and completed their mission for which they were authorized by Congress. The search for weapons of mass destruction is over. There were none, not a single one. The regime that put Iraq in an impossible international position no longer exists. So it's time that we draw down our troops from Iraq and require this administration to clearly define what the troop requirements and costs will be for the next phase of U.S. involvement in Iraq, a far more limited mission to root out al Qaeda and protect our diplomatic personnel inside Iraq.

The bill also promotes the kind of active diplomacy with Iraq's neighbors necessary for achieving a more lasting climate of stability in Iraq and throughout the region. Much, much more, Mr. Speaker, must be done. I expect to see stronger legislation in September, but this bill puts us on the right path.

For 5 long, deadly years, this Congress has done nothing but rubber-stamp a tragically flawed policy. It is shameful. Whatever the cause the President and many Members of Congress thought they were pursuing in Iraq, it is lost. Political leaders inside Iraq appear incapable of putting national interest ahead of sectarian and personal agendas. Iraqi security forces operate more like sectarian militias. And despite their best efforts, the additional military forces we have poured into the Baghdad region have not been able to change the equation.

Over 3,600 of our troops have lost their lives to this battle. Thousands more have been wounded. It is wrong, Mr. Speaker, simply wrong to ask them to continue to sacrifice their lives and their limbs for this failed policy.

The war in Iraq is breaking the back of our military. It is causing severe damage to the Federal budget to the tune of $10 billion each month, and causing grave harm to the future fiscal health of our Nation. It continues to undermine our most important political, diplomatic, military and strategic alliances. It saps our ability to focus on global terrorism and to safeguard our own people. And it has contributed to the chaos inside Iraq.

Mr. Speaker, it is past time for change. And while President Bush keeps scorning deadlines and promising

breakthroughs that never come, it is clear that he lacks the vision, the wisdom or the courage to chart a new course. It is frighteningly clear that the President plans, instead, to stay the course and dump this mess on the next President.

It is time for Congress to step up to the plate and change direction in Iraq. It is time for every Member of this House to work together to draw down our forces and bring our troops home to their families and their communities.

For too long Congress has been complicit, and the American people are frustrated, and they are angry. We don't need more studies or commissions. We don't need more excuses. We don't need more delay. Too many lives are being lost. What we need is for Members of Congress to make a choice, to stand up and be counted. Will you continue to rubber-stamp the current disastrous policies in Iraq or will you vote for change?

We must act now, Mr. Speaker. This is simply too important to wait any longer. Too many lives are on the line.

All of us, no matter how we originally voted on the war, share in the responsibility in what is happening in Iraq. All of us, by not voting to change course, are responsible for sending so many of our brave men and women into a civil war where far too many of them have been killed.

If the President of the United States will not respect the will of the American people and end this war, then Congress must.

[From the Los Angeles Times, July 11, 2007]

U.S. TROOP BUILDUP IN IRAQ FALLING SHORT

(By Julian E. Barnes and Ned Parker)

BAGHDAD.—In the Ubaidi neighborhood in the eastern part of this city, American soldiers hired a local Iraqi to clean the Porta-Potties at their combat outpost. Before the man could start, members of the local Shiite militia threatened to kill him.

Today, the Porta-Potties are roped off, and the U.S. soldiers, who could not promise to protect their sewage man, are forced to burn their waste.

As part of the Bush administration's troop ''surge'' strategy, the U.S. unit here had moved into an abandoned potato chip factory hoping to push out the militia, protect existing jobs and provide stability for economic growth. Instead, militia members stymied development projects, cut off the water supply and executed two young Iraqi women seen talking to U.S. soldiers, sending a powerful message about who really controls Ubaidi's streets.

In the next few days, the Bush administration is scheduled to release a preliminary assessment of its overall Iraq strategy. Officials may point to signs of progress scattered across the country: a reduction in death-squad killings in Baghdad, agreements with tribal leaders in Al Anbar province, offensives north and south of the capital.

President Bush defended his strategy Tuesday, demanding Congress give his administration more time and insisting that America can ''win this fight in Iraq.'' To underscore his request, Bush sent top aides to lobby lawmakers on Capitol Hill.

But as the experience of the troops in Ubaidi indicates, U.S. forces so far have been unable to establish security, even for themselves. Iraqis continue to flee their homes, leaving mixed areas and seeking safety in religiously segregated neighborhoods. About 32,000 families fled in June alone, according to figures compiled by the United Nations and the Iraqi government that are due to be released next week.

U.S. forces have staged offensives to push insurgents out of some safe havens. But many of the insurgents have escaped to new areas of the country, launching attacks where the U.S. presence is lighter.

And there has been no sign of any of the crucial political progress the administration had hoped to see in Iraq.

U.S. commanders are painfully aware that they are running out of time to change those realities. Army Gen. David H. Petraeus, the top American commander in Iraq, has made several efforts to slow the clock in Washington. Each time, it has sped up.

The full complement of the ''surge'' arrived in Iraq last month, bringing the total to 28,500 additional troops. Military officers originally hoped to have until 2008 before they had to render a verdict on the strategy. Then the Washington timeframe shrank to September. Now, it is shrinking further, with Congress demanding answers even sooner.

Supporters of the troop buildup insist that small steps could grow into larger and more long-term successes if lawmakers are patient.

''Right now we are three weeks into this. It's not like flipping a light switch,'' said a military officer in Baghdad, expressing the frustration of many commanders. ''Time has to be given for things to work.''

Commanders point to Ramadi, the capital of Al Anbar province, as a showcase for the kind of results the military wants from the current strategy. Once a battlefield, the city is now largely peaceful, calm enough that in March, Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri Maliki was able to pay his first official visit.

But military officers stress that it took about nine months of sustained effort to make Ramadi a relatively pacified city. And with its volatile mix of Sunni and Shiite Muslims, Baghdad presents a far more complex challenge than all-Sunni Ramadi.

The interim progress report that Bush promised to release this week is likely to emphasize the success the military has had in killing Sunni militants in the ''Baghdad belts,'' the cities and towns that dot the major rivers and highways leading to the capital. In recent weeks, the newly arrived U.S. forces have been focused on fighting members of Al Qaeda in Iraq, a militant Sunni group made up of Iraqis and foreign fighters.

Top generals say the strategy is crucial to securing Baghdad. Only by controlling the routes into the capital, and denying militants safe havens, can the U.S. and Iraqi militaries keep out the car bombs that stoke sectarian violence inside the capital.

But leading Iraqis are less sure of the strategy.

Mahmoud Othman, a Kurdish member of the Iraqi parliament, said the U.S. approach may be successful at weakening Al Qaeda in Iraq. But he said Americans would not be able to solve Iraq's sectarian conflict or stop clashes between armed groups in Baghdad neighborhoods.

''The surge has an important effect in fighting Al Qaeda,'' the independent politician said. ''On the Sunni-Shiite conflict, it hasn't had any effect. . . . Extremist Shiites and Sunnis are fighting each other. The Americans can't stop this.''

U.S. officials have made little, if any, progress with their persistent calls for Iraqi officials to take steps toward reconciliation between Shiites and Sunnis.

Key administration officials, most prominently Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates and Vice President Dick Cheney, have visited Iraq to push for passage of an oil-revenue sharing law, provincial elections and reform of rules barring members of the former ruling Baath Party from government jobs.

But the Iraqi government is bogged down by fighting among Shiite, Sunni and Kurdish parties. It is unclear whether the oil law, the one piece of benchmark legislation still given hopes for passage before September, will reach a vote any time soon.

The number of death-squad killings in the capital, one sign of sectarian divisions, is down from earlier this year. But the number remains roughly at the level seen after the 2006 bombing of Samarra's Golden Mosque, which served as a catalyst for the extreme sectarian violence.

In Baghdad, the number of bodies found dumped in the streets dropped to 540 last month from 830 in January. Some American officers say those numbers could rise again. And others say that the decline may simply represent the depressing reality that most Baghdad neighborhoods are now segregated, meaning there are fewer people left for death squads to kill.

Maj. Gen. Joseph Fil, Jr., the commander of U.S. forces in Baghdad, said that American troops at the end of June controlled about 42% of the city's neighborhoods, up from 19% in April.

But to many Iraqis, that is little comfort. ''The Americans do not make me feel safe,'' said Amin Sadiq, a 30-year-old Shiite worker in the Ghadeer neighborhood of east Baghdad. ''When you hear the speeches of the top U.S. military leaders, you think that everything is ideal and perfect and Iraq will be better. But when you see how the U.S. soldiers behave, I really feel I should not trust the leaders.''

The American military has helped bring a tense truce in some areas, but has not re-integrated once-mixed neighborhoods.

The western Baghdad neighborhood of Ghazaliya, once a prosperous mixed middle-class area, was riven by sectarian violence in 2006. It is now divided between Shiites in the northern end and Sunnis in the south, with the U.S. military stuck in the middle, trying to keep the peace.

''Last year, things were bad. This year is worse than before,'' said a man in his 50s who identified himself as Qais Qaisi.

The presence of Iraqi and American security forces means that Sunnis cannot fight back against the Shiite militias, which have the tacit support of the Iraqi army unit in the area, Qaisi said. But he nevertheless voiced concern about a possible American pullout.

''If the multinational forces withdraw, there will be very bloody sectarian battles,'' he said.

Military officers routinely say that improving the economy is a prerequisite to improving security. And U.S. forces, by putting up barriers and controlling traffic, have been able to reopen some marketplaces that had been targeted by suicide bombers. Although that has allowed some neighborhood commerce, success with other projects has proved more elusive.

The Pentagon is working to reopen state-owned factories and has identified several dozen that can be renovated and restarted. But that work is slow, and many residents say they see few improvements in their neighborhoods.

Although U.S. forces have been able to overcome militia threats and start small neighborhood projects such as installing streetlights, they are not able to initiate larger undertakings.

''We aren't doing anything meaningful,'' said one mid-level noncommissioned officer. ''Where are the real projects? We aren't offering these people enough safety, or money, or jobs.''

Amid the political setbacks and continuing violence, however, there are signs of relative calm in some areas.

Earlier this year, the streets of Baghdad were desolate at sunset. Now, in places, there are signs of life.

In Yarmouk, a neighborhood in west Baghdad, 18-year-old Ahmed Shakir used to see bodies on the street every day. Snipers fired from hidden perches and gunmen clashed with U.S. and Iraqi soldiers. But last month, after weeks of U.S. patrols, his neighborhood started to feel safe—safe enough for Shakir to stay outside on the basketball court until 8:30 p.m.

''It is usually me and three of my friends, we always go play basketball,'' he said. ''Now we have U.S. and Iraqi patrols roaming the streets every day. If they continued doing this, things will remain better. If not, then it will get worse for sure.

CENTER FOR AMERICAN PROGRESS

To: Members of the 110th Congress.

From: John Podesta, Lawrence Korb, and Brian Katulis.

Re: Iraq Study Group's Recommendations Overtaken by Events in Iraq.

Date: July 11, 2007.

Senators Ken Salazar (D–CO) and Lamar Alexander (R–TN) have introduced legislation that would adopt all of the recommendations of the Iraq Study Group. There are growing signs that the White House and Republican legislators, having previously rejected the ISG report late last year, will now seek to co-opt the ISG recommendations this summer and fail to provide a bipartisan veneer to their efforts to pretend they are shifting course in Iraq.

We acknowledge the important contributions made by the ISG and its co-chairmen James Baker and Lee Hamilton, but progressives need to point out that some of the ISG's recommendations are ambiguous and others have been overtaken by events. Congress needs to understand that the ISG's three main recommendations face five key issues that raise questions about the relevance of the ISG's recommendations today.

The ISG report had three main recommendations:

1. Place greater emphasis on political benchmarks for the Iraqi government to ensure disaffected groups (specifically the Sunnis) are brought into Iraq's political process.

2. Accelerate and increase the training of Iraqi security forces to allow them to take over from U.S. forces and transition U.S. forces from combat missions in 2008.

3. Initiate a region-wide diplomatic offensive to contain and resolve Iraq's conflicts.

The ISG recommendations now face five practical obstacles:

1. Conditioning U.S. troop withdrawal from Iraq on the outdated ''We'll stand down when the Iraqis stand up'' formula.

The main problem with the ISG report is that it conditions the eventual U.S. troop withdrawal on Iraq's splintered national leadership. The ISG report spells out a long list of preconditions for withdrawing U.S. troops, which actually gets the situation backwards—the United States needs to put Iraqis and the countries in the region on notice to motivate them to act more constructively in their own self-interest in order to contain and resolve Iraq's multiple internal conflicts.

The fundamental challenge with Iraq's security forces is not skills building and training. It is instead a problem of motivation and allegiance. The last six months in Iraq have reinforced the point that Iraqis will not take responsibility as long as U.S. forces remain in the country in such large numbers. Despite the latest escalation, the Iraqi government has not made any progress toward reconciliation.

The Bush strategy as well as the core ISG recommendations ignore a fundamental reality—that the situation in Iraq has little chance to improve until U.S. troops begin redeploying.

2. Placing too much focus on Iraq's central government, a dysfunctional and divided government that lacks the unified support of its own leaders.

The ISG recommendations place a strong emphasis on getting the Iraqi national government to meet several political benchmarks that are not only unachievable in the short term but irrelevant today because of changed conditions in Iraq. In fact, the Iraqi national government is increasingly trapped in bitter disputes along sectarian lines that have paralyzed the government.

Iraq's leaders fundamentally disagree on what Iraq is and should be. The benchmarks passed by Congress in May—the subject of a forthcoming report from the Bush administration—ignore the key reality that Iraq may suffer from unbridgeable divides.

Meeting these political benchmarks will likely have no effect on the major conflicts in Iraq and may well exacerbate the Kurd-Arab and intra-Shi'a conflicts emerging in Iraq's northern and southern regions. As such, these benchmarks provide false hope for resolving a series of conflicts that require a much deeper solution than the United States can provide unilaterally.

3. Paying insufficient attention to the 2005 Iraq Constitution and the will of the Iraqi people.

The ISG report outlines a course that would lead to the unraveling of Iraq's constitution. One of the ISG's main recommendations is that ''the [United States] should support as much as possible central control by governmental authorities in Baghdad, particularly on the question of oil revenue.'' But this cuts against the grain of what Iraqis supported in their own constitution, passed by popular referendum in 2005. Iraq's constitution establishes a framework for a strongly decentralized federal system.

Not surprisingly, many Iraqi leaders objected to the recommendations of the ISG report. Iraqi President Jalal Talabani, a Kurd, rejected the ISG report. In addition to criticisms from Iraq's leaders, the ISG recommendations lack a broad-base of support among Iraqis, a strong majority of whom want U.S. forces to leave Iraq within a year.

According to a poll of the Iraqi public conducted in 2006, 71 percent of Iraqis wanted the Iraqi government to ask for U.S.-led forces to be withdrawn from Iraq within a year or less. Another 61 percent support attacks on U.S.-led forces. In short, many Iraqis are opposed to the ISG recommendations, and as a result the United States would face severe problems attempting to implement them.

4. Supporting the unconditional training of Iraq's security forces, which is deeply problematic.

The core of the ISG report is the recommendation that the United States accelerate and increase the training of Iraqi security forces. It proposes an American advisory effort of between 10,000 and 20,000, comparable to the U.S. advisory strength in Vietnam at its height. Increasing the capacity of the Iraqi security forces, however, won't rectify their three main problems:

The Iraqi security forces are far from reliable. The Pentagon estimates that at least one-third of the Iraqi Army is on leave at any one time; desertion and other problems bring the total to over half in some units. Of the 11,000 Iraqi soldiers assigned to the recent U.S.-led offensive in Baquba in June, only 1,500 showed up. Infiltration by sectarian militias into the Interior Ministry has been identified as a severe problem. Many Iraqi security forces have been implicated in sectarian violence, most notably the National Police and certain elements of the Iraqi Army. Allegations have emerged during the Baquba offensive that Sunni and Shiite soldiers cooperated with Sunni insurgents and Shiite militias, respectively. Some have even tried to kill American troops. Giving weapons and training to Iraq's security forces in the absence of a national political consensus in Iraq risks inflaming Iraq's conflicts. In fact, the violence has escalated at the same time as the number of trained Iraqi security forces has increased.

Iraq's government has used Iraqi security forces to promote their sectarian interests rather than the national interest. Most troubling is the manner in which the government of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki has used the Iraqi security forces. He has focused primarily on going after Sunni insurgents with Iraqi forces, leaving the impression that he is acting on behalf of Shi'a sectarian interests. Worse still, officials in the prime minister's office have often replaced officers that are perceived as competent and non-sectarian.

Force protection concerns for the United States. The ISG's training recommendation suffers from two more flaws: force protection and time. The number of troops dedicated to protecting American advisors from insurgents would drain resources needed to perform other missions crucial to U.S. interests such as counterterrorism. In addition, many experts observe that it takes years if not decades to train a professional, competent army. Past experiences of unpopular foreign military forces facing an insurgency while training local security forces do not inspire confidence in the success of future efforts. There is no reason to presume we will be able to do any better even if we had unlimited time in Iraq (which we don't).

5. Offering undeveloped ideas on a regional diplomatic offensive.

The ISG proposed creating a regional contact group to help solve Iraq's internal and external problems diplomatically. While it is important for the United States to undertake a diplomatic offensive as it begins a phased redeployment from Iraq, the ISG approach is too broad.

Rather than dealing with Iraq's multiple internal conflicts as discrete problems that require separate attention, the ISG approach could result in a ''one-size-fits-all'' diplomatic package. Progressives should recognize that each of Iraq's neighbors have differing interests in each ofIraq's conflicts, and then advocate that the United States tailor its diplomacy to each conflict in an attempt to deal individually with the myriad problems confronting Iraq.

CONCLUSION

Progressives should not allow the recommendations of the ISG report to be accepted without question. Nor should they allow the White House to legitimate its still-stay-the course policy by paying lip service to the ISG recommendations.

Rather, progressives should advocate a policy that allows us to strategically reset our military forces, our diplomatic personnel, and our intelligence operations by redeploying out troops in 12 months, partitioning our diplomatic effort to better deal with Iraq's multiple conflict, rethinking our approach to Iraq's government and its security

forces, and redirecting our immense national power toward destroying those terrorists who attacked us on 9/11. The time is past for more half-way measures.

The United States needs to move toward a ''Strategic Reset'' of its policy in Iraq and the Middle East, one that recognizes the increasingly fragmented situation on the ground and build a more sustainable approach to advancing long-term U.S. interests in the region.

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, as I yield to my friend from Pennsylvania, let me just say, we do have a great chance to work together, that's why we were, in fact, proposing an alternative, that being a chance for us to work on the bipartisan Iraq Study Group recommendations.

With that, I'm happy to yield 4 minutes to my very good friend from Erie, Pennsylvania (Mr. ENGLISH).

Mr. ENGLISH of Pennsylvania. I thank the gentleman.

Mr. Speaker, today I rise in the strongest possible opposition to this rule.

In the panoply of public policy issues, there is no more important question than starting or ending an armed conflict. The decision we make today will determine whether men and women will live or die, not only on the battlefields of Iraq but also potentially in the cities of Europe and America.

The discussion that we conduct today should transcend crass political partnership and narrow ideology to reflect our deepest concern for the Nation and, indeed, for the community of nations.

The House of Representatives today should be prepared to engage in a free and fair debate regarding all of the potential options for the future conduct of combat operations and diplomatic initiatives in Iraq and the broader Middle East. We should be discussing the recommendations of the Baker-Hamilton Iraq Study Group. We should be examining some of the ideas laid out by Senator LUGAR. We should be considering the suggestion of Congresswoman HEATHER WILSON and I that we made to the President recently encouraging him to convene a high-level summit of Iraqi sectarian leaders. We should exclude no viable alternative, even that offered by my colleague from Ohio (Mr. KUCINICH).

The legislation we will consider later today does have the potential to serve as a starting point of determining a new course of action in Iraq, but it is badly flawed, and it needs substantial improvement, and unfortunately, that will not be possible. The rule the Democrats have laid before the House today demonstrates their motivations are, at core, political. And I remember when politics ended at the water's edge.

They do not offer us an open rule, allowing full and free debate. They don't even allow us a structured rule, permitting, at the very least, discussion of some of the major alternatives that I've outlined.

Mr. Speaker, we all know that certain parties want things from this debate today. They've already recorded their robo calls, purchased airtime for their attack ads. They've scheduled buses for their rent-a-mobs. And the last thing they really desire is a free, open and informed debate that might result in a unified policy regarding our Nation's future efforts in Iraq. They seek not to unite our Nation but to divide it.

The people who bring this rule to the floor today do not allow amendments because they're afraid. They're afraid that some of these amendments might prevail. They're afraid that, given viable alternatives, some Members of their own party will choose cooperation over confrontation.

□ 1100

Mostly, they are afraid they might lose a major issue for their campaign to maintain their majority. Their fear may or may not be justified, but its very existence is a sad commentary on their faith in the Members of their own party, this body, and the American people.

I remind my colleagues that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself. Reject this cynical rule. Vote ''no'' on the previous question. Let's have a full and fair debate on this, the most critical issue of our generation.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, give me 3 seconds to say that under the Republican administration, not a single Iraqi measure was brought up under an open rule.

And now I am pleased to yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. MATSUI).

Ms. MATSUI. I thank the gentlewoman from New York for yielding me time and for her leadership on the Rules Committee.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this rule and in support of the underlying bill. Today presents us with another opportunity to change direction in Iraq, a change that is desperately needed. I have opposed this war from the beginning. I have long supported ways to bring this war to a responsible close. I urge my colleagues to seize this opportunity now before we do further disservice to the brave men and women in Iraq.

The last time I rose in opposition to Iraq policy, I talked about George and Dee Heath from my hometown of Sacramento. All three of their sons served in Iraq. Recently, I learned that one of their sons, David, was hit in an RPG attack on his convoy. Thank goodness he was not wounded gravely, and he will be coming home to recover.

Mr. Speaker, today's vote is about our responsibility to the Heath sons and to the more than 150,000 other men and women in harm's way. They are doing what is being asked of them heroically and patriotically. It fills me with sorrow that more than 3,600 soldiers have paid the ultimate price for their heroism, including 385 from my home State of California.

Our responsibility to them as their elected leaders should be, it must be, to ensure that their mission is clear and achievable. Today, we have the opportunity to fulfill our responsibility as the President has not. Sadly, the President's disastrous leadership is ignoring his duty to the troops. We cannot sit idly by.

The Iraqi Government is not meeting any of its political, economic, or military benchmarks. The President's surge policy has had disastrous results. In fact, 600 troops have been killed and more than 3,000 have been wounded since he announced this policy.

Our troops are stranded on the front lines without clear guidance and without a clear mission. In light of such inept leadership by the President, the American people have lost their patience. Most Americans support removing troops by April. They want us to refocus on terrorism. Yet, still the President refuses to reconsider. It is clear from the President's blind stubbornness that Congress must show the President the way.

Our troops are at the breaking point. We are refereeing a civil war. The solution is a political one, not a military one. But in this late and crucial hour, you have to do more than talk about change. You have to vote for it. You have to fight for it. Chairman SKELTON's bill keeps the safety of our troops and our Nation's security at the forefront by changing course in Iraq. I urge all my colleagues to support this bill.

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, it is absolutely laughable to listen to the distinguished Chair of the Committee on Rules, after having berated us for the longest period of time, use us as a model for the procedure around which we are considering this legislation. This is a bill, not a resolution, which is what we brought up in the last Congress.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 3¼ minutes to the very distinguished gentleman, a former member of the Rules Committee, from Marietta, Georgia (Mr. GINGREY).

Mr. GINGREY. Mr. Speaker, I thank my former chairman of the Rules Committee, the gentleman from California, for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to oppose this rule and condemn the underlying bill, hastily leaving Iraq without any clear exit strategy.

Mr. Speaker, the timing of this legislation should raise some serious questions for the American people. It comes at a critical point in the global war on terror, a point at which our efforts should be focused on defeating terrorism inflicted by Islamic jihadists, not usurping the power of our military commanders, as this bill clearly does.

Today's debate comes on the heels of an intelligence analysis stating al Qaeda has regrouped to a level not seen since 9/11 with a greater ability to strike inside the United States. It comes in the immediate aftermath of the Muslim extremist attacks in London and Glasgow. In sum, it comes at a time when our decisions must be based

on strategic interests and not political grandstanding.

However, Mr. Speaker, this bill is not designed to help us fight terrorism to secure the United States' interests. In fact, its timing has nothing to do with national security at all.

Today, the Democratic leaderships want us to vote on a change of course before we have had the opportunity to fully analyze the President's interim report on our strategy in Iraq, and well ahead of the much anticipated September report to be delivered by General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker.

So why are we debating this now? Curiously, it comes at a time when this Democratic Congress has an approval rating as low as 14 percent. That's right, Mr. Speaker, their approval is at an all-time low. Their base, the extremist left, is very angry. They are angry at the Democrats' Out of Iraq Caucus because they failed to deliver. Indeed, Cindy Sheehan, their poster child, has now announced her candidacy against Speaker PELOSI.

So what do the Democrats do? They take another shot at Old Faithful. When all else fails, when they can't get anything accomplished, when all they can deliver to the American public is the most closed Congress in history, they engage in another round of political theater engineered to do nothing but grab a few headlines and appease that liberal base.

Mr. Speaker, let's not waste the time of this body by debating vague bills with absolutely no chance of becoming law. Let's instead examine the upcoming September report from our top military commanders and then, yes, then make informed decisions on the best path forward.

My friend, the distinguished chairwoman of the Rules Committee, the gentlewoman from New York, stated in her opening remarks that if we wait until September, as I suggest, 200 more troops would be lost and the lives of 200 families would be changed forever.

Mr. Speaker, let me remind my colleagues that within a 20-minute period of time on September 11, 2001, 3,000 lives were lost, some of our brightest and best; and, indeed, the lives of 3,000 families were changed forever.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to urge my colleagues to oppose this rule and to oppose the irresponsible underlying bill.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Vermont (Mr. WELCH).

Mr. WELCH of Vermont. Mr. Speaker, I vigorously opposed the war in Iraq before it began, and now, well into its fifth year, the need for a new policy has never been clearer. The toll of this war has been devastating: more than 3,600 of our most courageous men and women killed, tens of thousands seriously wounded; the toll on civilians much higher still. And while we struggle to fund domestic priorities in Vermont, in all our States across this Nation, health care, a crumbling infrastructure, transportation, the cost of education, we now spend $12 billion every single month on this war.

From last November's elections, to public opinion polls, to the comments I hear from Vermonters every single day, the voice of the American people is loud and it is clear: we must end this war. And since the President refuses, absolutely refuses, to act, Congress must. Since the President refuses, Congress must make it clear that the United States will not maintain permanent military bases in Iraq. Since the President refuses, Congress must denounce the use of torture. It must finally close Guantanamo Bay. And since the President refuses, Congress must bring our troops home and ensure they receive the care they deserve when they return.

Mr. Speaker, 7 months ago, under the leadership of the previous Congress, a bill like this never would have been allowed to come to the floor. Now, 7 months later, today, there is an emerging bipartisan consensus that the President must be forced to change his course.

By passing this bill today, Congress will demonstrate with the force of law what the American people well know: it is time to end the war in Iraq.

I cosponsored and voted in favor of legislation offered by my colleague Mr. MCGOVERN of Massachusetts that called for redeployment of our troops from Iraq within 6 months. I voted against additional funds for the war without a timeline. And I cosponsored legislation that would close Guantanamo Bay, outlaw torture, defend the right of habeas corpus, and prohibit the establishment of permanent military bases.

At the end of the day, Americans know that no action in the House of Representatives is not enough until all of our troops are returned home. This bill provides a starting point for progress towards realizing that goal. Until our troops are home, I will not stop, and Congress must not stop in its efforts to compel the President to end this war.

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, let me at this time yield 2 minutes to our friend from Bridgeport, Connecticut (Mr. SHAYS), who has made 17 trips to Iraq and unfortunately was denied an opportunity to have us consider and vote on a very thoughtful amendment that he proposed in the Rules Committee last night.

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, as I walked into this Chamber, Congressman MCGOVERN said we need to work together to bring our troops home. He is right. But the resolution we will be debating today does not allow us to consider bipartisan proposals. There were a number of amendments presented to the Rules Committee, and they rejected all of them.

The gentlewoman from New York, Ms. SLAUGHTER, can say, when Republicans were in control, they didn't do that, they didn't allow bipartisan amendments. That is about the most insignificant and meaningless statement she could make, because Democrats are now in charge, and they are in charge in part because of the war in Iraq and because they promised to be different and have open debate and allow us all to say what we needed to say and from that find consensus.

There are two things I agree on: we need to bring our troops home, and we need a deadline to do that. But this deadline begins in 120 days and concludes by April of next year, guaranteeing absolute failure, laying waste to all the investment we have talked about.

We need to bring our troops home, but not by the deadline that has been offered. It is the only deadline. So when I vote against what I think is a foolish deadline, the media is going to say exactly what my Democratic colleagues want them to say, that we voted against a deadline and that we are not sincere about bringing our troops home.

Give me a deadline I can support, and I will vote for it. Give me an opportunity to at least debate a deadline that I could support.

We are going to bring our troops home because we can't maintain this level of engagement in Iraq without extending troops from 15 months to 18 months. We are not going to allow that to happen. Our troops will be coming home, but not by April. They will be coming home in a more thoughtful way.

I urge defeat of this resolution. In particular, it did not allow for the Wolf amendment, which was the Iraq Study Group proposal. This is what we need to be voting on. We all say that we agree with it and support it. Well, why not bring it to the floor? What are we afraid of?

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, let me have about 2 seconds to say that we have allowed 4 hours of general debate. I think everybody will have an opportunity to discuss what they think of the deadline.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. CASTOR).

□ 1115

Ms. CASTOR. I thank the distinguished chair of the Rules Committee for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise as a cosponsor of the Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act under this rule, and urge my colleagues to pass it today, because in this summer of 2007, in the fifth year of the Bush-Cheney war in Iraq, it is imperative that we chart a new direction for our national security and be more strategic in the defense of America.

As a member of the House Armed Services Committee, it is clear to me that the reckless White House policy and now the escalation of the war is undermining our country's readiness and ability to respond to other global

threats to our national security. Indeed, in testimony before our committee, top commanders have testified that America runs a strategic risk by staying on the same course in Iraq.

The generals confirm that because our personnel and equipment are tied up in Iraq, our ability to handle future threats and contingencies is reduced. In my State of Florida, for example, the National Guard does not have all of the equipment it needs to train and deploy soldiers. They are only 28 percent equipped. In effect, President Bush's war in Iraq is impairing our country's ability to prepare for any other threat to our national security.

Florida also feels the pinch of multiple deployments because, time and again, our brave men and women are being asked to go back, to leave their families, leave their jobs, return to the field of battle after inadequate rest at home. Florida currently has the second highest number of troops out of the 50 States deployed in Iraq, over 23,000. And 172 Floridians have been killed and over 1,200 have been wounded since military operations began there over 4 years ago. Hardly a week goes by that my office is not contacted and informed of another sad but heroic death in this cause. In fact, last week, two more Tampa Bay area brave, heroic soldiers were killed by IEDs.

People ask me, why are our young American men and women refereeing the ongoing Shiite-Sunni civil war? American troops cannot resolve the Iraqi sectarian and religious conflict; only Iraqis can find the political resolution required to stabilize Iraq. America has now spent over $450 billion in Iraq. When will the Iraqi government take responsibility for the future of their country?

President Bush's war in Iraq has been very costly. Over $10 billion a month now, costly not just in terms of degradation of our Nation's readiness, the waste and fraud due to the lack of oversight, but President Bush is sacrificing the health care of our children and our seniors and investments in our towns and neighborhoods while continuing this war without end.

So after 4 years of war and over 3,500 American lives, and the Bush-Cheney failure to aggressively pursue a political solution, we demand a new direction and a comprehensive strategy for our great Nation.

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. SUTTON).

Ms. SUTTON. Mr. Speaker, I thank the distinguished gentlewoman for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, for 4 long years our country has endured a tragic war, a treacherous journey down a dark and winding path, with no clear routes, no clear destination and fatal hazards lurking around every blind corner.

Today I rise again with Chairman SKELTON and my colleagues to act to clear the road ahead, to bring its end into the light. I rise again to push, to prod, to urge my colleagues to help us end the President's failed policy; to help us change the mission to a mission based in reality; to help us end the ravages that our brave soldiers who have performed so heroically, remove them from the crossfire in which they are caught, to remove them from the snipers' bullets and the life-ending IEDs.

I rise with the hope that those who have stood with the President and have given his Iraq policy a chance to succeed and another chance to succeed and another chance to succeed, that they will today choose a responsible change in direction based in reality that will establish a comprehensive and clear strategy for our role in Iraq.

Congress has allowed the President to lead our troops down this path for too long. It is time to demand accountability, to demand an exit strategy that is clear, and to demand an end to the injury and death that our brave soldiers face every day as they courageously proceed down this undefined road on which the President has placed them and they have dutifully traveled.

The President's ambling course has led our troops through the deadliest 3 months of the war in April, May and June of this year. During those three deadly months, 329 American soldiers died in Iraq. The cost of continuing down this path is too great. We must act to bring direction and accountability to the United States' mission for the sake of our troops and the families that love and support them.

It brings me great sadness to report that, since the war began in the spring of 2003, 163 brave men and women from Ohio have been killed. And 25 of those precious lives have been lost since the surge. The President's escalation of this war means six more grieving families in Ohio since when I last spoke in favor of the redeployment bill in May of this year. How many more times will we come to this floor to demand responsibility and accountability from our President? How many more families will be devastated by the loss of a loved one? How many more times will we hear the administration continue to argue that we are, quote, ''just about to make progress''?

Last November, the people of the 13th District of Ohio made their voices heard when they went to the polls. Their voices joined with the voices of people across this Nation. They voted for a change in direction, and today we act to give it to them.

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, at this time I am happy to yield 2 minutes to one of the most respected Members of this House on intelligence and defense matters, the gentlewoman from Albuquerque, New Mexico (Mrs. WILSON).

Mrs. WILSON of New Mexico. Mr. Speaker, I want to let my colleagues know that I will be asking for a recorded vote on the previous question on this rule.

We have a problem, a very serious problem that we must address before the House adjourns in August, and this resolution which we have done before does not deal with the real issues that this House must address because of the threat that we face.

If the previous question is defeated, I will offer an amendment to the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act that clarifies one very simple and critical thing, that the United States Government will no longer be required to get a warrant to listen to terrorists who are not in the United States.

The Director of National Intelligence has testified to us, as has the director of the CIA, that their hands are currently tied. They are being tied up, requiring warrants with probable cause, to listen to people who are terrorists who are not even in the United States because of the way the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act is written.

We cannot allow ourselves to be deaf and blind because of a law that is woefully outdated. All of us have heard what the Department of Homeland Security has said, the chatter is at levels we have not seen since the summer of 2001. And the Director of National Intelligence has testified we are missing significant portions of intelligence. We have to open our ears and open our eyes to keep this Nation safe. That is the critical issue we should be debating here today. And if we defeat the previous question, I will immediately offer that for the consideration of the House.

Mr. WELCH of Vermont. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. HARMAN).

Ms. HARMAN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding, and I would point out to our colleagues that the action just described in my view is not necessary.

I rise in support of the rule, the underlying bill, and in strong support for ending our combat mission in Iraq and redirecting our efforts towards stability in the region, including Iraq, but also in trouble spots like Iran, Lebanon, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Let me make three points.

First, based on firsthand experience from my fourth visit to Iraq just weeks ago, Baghdad is not safer. True, we have worked successfully with tribal leaders against al Qaeda in Anbar Province, but the major population center, Baghdad, the focus of our military surge, is not turning around. Progress will not be made by a continuation of our combat mission.

Second, the Skelton bill mirrors a companion bill in the other body which has impressive bipartisan support. I urge Republicans to support this measure, and know that some will do so.

The message our constituents want to hear is that 290 of us, a veto-proof bipartisan majority, insist on a responsible end to our combat mission in Iraq beginning now with passage of this bill.

Third, though I feel Homeland Security Secretary Chertoff's use of the words ''gut feeling'' was unwise, I share

the view that our country could be attacked at any time. Al Qaeda has regrouped in Pakistan and expanded its reach throughout North Africa. Homegrown cells in England and elsewhere are increasing, and our assumption must be that they are here as well.

Low-tech, low-scale vehicle-borne attacks are, sadly, not hard to execute. At a minimum, those, and attacks on soft targets like our mass transit systems, may be in our near future.

DHS, FBI and our exceptionally talented local police departments are working overtime, though their ranks are depleted and their equipment and they are surged in Iraq. But 100 percent protection is impossible.

Mr. Speaker, this is where our attention must be, and our resources. Pass the Skelton bill.

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, at this time I am happy to yield 4 minutes to my friend from Holland, Michigan, the former chairman, now the ranking member of the Select Committee on Intelligence.

Mr. HOEKSTRA. Mr. Speaker, later on, my colleague from California will make a motion to defeat the previous question, as the gentlewoman from New Mexico (Mrs. WILSON) indicated. That will then enable us to address a very serious issue, the problem that, right now, we are blind and deaf to people who may want to attack the United States.

As Secretary Chertoff indicated earlier this week, all of the indications are that we still remain very, very vulnerable. The chatter, the signals, indicate more clearly that America is still at risk. And it is not only the chatter. All you really need to do is take a look at what al Qaeda says. They are clear on their intent to attack the United States again.

Take a look at what happened in the U.K. 2 weeks ago. Planned attacks in the heart of London, a planned attack at an airport indicate that al Qaeda and radical jihadists want to attack the U.K.; they want to attack in Europe, and they want to attack us in the United States.

One of the things that needs to be clear is that what has helped keep us safe is our intelligence community. And as our ability to gain information has changed and adapted over the last couple of years, it has become even more clear that FISA needs to be updated, and FISA needs to be updated now. It needs to be done before we go home in August because if we expect to stay safe, we need to make sure that our intelligence community has all of the tools at its disposal to identify risks, to identify potential terrorists and to identify individuals who want to do us harm.

FISA should not be used to protect international terrorists. It should not be used to protect radical jihadists. It should not be used as a screen to protect members of al Qaeda. Remember, FISA was designed in the 1970s, designed to handle a Cold War surveillance of countries like the Soviet Union. Back then and into the 1980s and early 1990s, our intelligence community only needed to be one step faster than the former Soviet Union. We didn't have to be that fast. And the risks and the threats were not as real or as immediate to our homeland as what they are today.

Today our intelligence community needs to be one, two, three steps faster than radical jihadists, radical jihadists who use technology and who use the Internet and who use the communications world of today to drive their message and to plan their attacks. We need to be able to penetrate into it and penetrate into it very effectively.

□ 1130

Now is the time to modernize FISA. Now is the time to make sure that the intelligence community has the capability to identify the threats and the individuals who may want to attack the United States and make sure that they are in a position to identify these threats and get this information to our law enforcement individuals in the United States in a seamless way.

We've made progress in a number of areas in intelligence reform. There's still much work to do, but one of the areas that we have not done is update FISA.

Defeat the previous question and allow for the modernization of FISA now.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. LOEBSACK).

Mr. LOEBSACK. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, today it was reported that al Qaeda is as strong now as it was prior to the 9/11 attacks. Meanwhile, our troops who have served with honor and distinction are mired in the middle of a religious civil war in Iraq. The men and women of Iowa's National Guard have faced multiple redeployments at great sacrifice to them and their families.

The American people continue to demand a new way forward in Iraq. Even Members of the President's own party are demanding change. We must immediately begin to chart a new course.

I'm a cosponsor of the Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act because it provides for the safe withdrawal of combat troops by April 1, 2008. We must bring home our troops safely and responsibly. We must also redirect our efforts against terrorism.

This bill represents a step forward, and I urge its passage and the rule.

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, may I inquire of my very good friend from Rochester, New York, the distinguished Chair of the Committee on Rules, how many speakers she has remaining.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Certainly, Mr. Speaker. I have two.

Mr. DREIER. With that, Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. SOLIS).

Ms. SOLIS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from New York for yielding time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to support the rule and also the underlying bill, the Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act. We can't afford to spend $10 billion a month on this failed war and continue to see the loss of lives, 3,600 now. From my district alone, 14 individuals have not come home to see their families. 27,000 have come home injured from the war.

I want to tell you that in March I had the opportunity to visit some of our troops in Iraq, many from California representing southern California's San Gabriel Valley. Many of them told me they did not have appropriate equipment, that they were there for an insurmountable time, many on their second, third and fourth tour. One family member from the City of Azusa told me that he had not even seen his child. It had been already 14 months.

I would ask Members of Congress to remember who our constituents are. I have the adjoining district next to Congressman DREIER. In my district alone, 4–1 in a survey said, Republican and Democrat, we want the Congress to get us out of the war.

I ask for support of our bill and the rule.

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, I continue to reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. DOGGETT).

Mr. DOGGETT. Mr. Speaker, we were reassured that ''progress'' was being made in Iraq 500 deaths ago, 1,000 deaths ago, 2,000 deaths ago, and 3,000 deaths ago.

Like the boy who cried wolf, this President cries ''progress.'' What progress?

With all this talk about benchmarks, I think it's time to get off the bench and bring our troops home now, with an immediate, responsible, and safe redeployment.

President Bush says as we approach five years of being in Iraq, he says ''listen to the generals.''

Well, we've listened to them, and his top general says if we followed his course, if we stay his course, we'll be in Iraq fighting for another five to ten years.

Real progress would begin by adopting today's very modest proposal and moving forward united so that our troops are not caught up in a final disastrous position in Iraq, and that we responsibly redeploy to protect our families, rather than generating one generation after another of jihadists.

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, I continue to reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I have no more requests for time and ask if the gentleman has more requests.

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, I'm going to close the debate now, so I yield myself the balance of the time.

Mr. Speaker, let me just begin by talking about procedure. We continue

to hear the distinguished Chair of the Committee on Rules talk regularly about an open amendment process, and I will say with absolute certainty, I had the privilege of chairing the Rules Committee for 8 years, and I will tell you that we have brought more rules to the floor of this House under a completely closed process during the first 7 months of this year than we did during any 7 months during the 8 years that I was privileged to serve as chairman of the Rules Committee. So much for a new and open process.

Now, let's look at what it is we're considering here, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we know full well that this is a bill, unlike resolutions that may have been brought up under closed rules in the past, this is actually a bill, a bill that's scheduled to go to the President's desk. Everyone knows that this bill is not going to become law.

What we've found is gross politicization once again, a commitment made that every week we're going to have some kind of vote on Iraq.

We all know that the war in Iraq is very unpopular. We know that the President is a great punching bag on this for virtually everyone, but the fact of the matter is we are in the midst of a very important global war on terror, and as the President said in the past, you know, we all like to be loved, but I'd much rather be right than be loved.

The fact of the matter is, we want to bring this war to an end. The President stood right here in this chamber in January and said I wish that this war were over and that we had won, but we need to ensure victory. And, Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, we are not given the opportunity to consider any thoughtful, bipartisan alternative to this measure which calls for the withdrawal to begin within 120 days. I mean, how crazy is that when we're looking for a report to come in September and as we are looking at success that has begun even after only 1 month, 1 month of this plan having been put into place under the greatly heralded General David Petraeus?

Now, Mr. Speaker, as my friends from New Mexico and Michigan have said, I'm going to move to defeat the previous question. I'm going to move to defeat the previous question so that we can actually ensure that we have the tools to win this war on terror. We've had a number of anniversaries marked. We've spent a lot of time talking about them, but we fail to remember the success that we've had at preempting attacks on this country.

Just last month, we marked the first anniversary of the discovery of the proposed attack on the Sears Tower and the FBI headquarters in Miami.

Just last week, we marked the first anniversary of the proposed attack on the plan to blow up the Hudson River tunnel between New Jersey and Manhattan.

Just in May, we had a report of the plan, as you all know, to see some of these people go in and start killing our people at Fort Dix in New Jersey.

And then of course, just a few weeks ago, we had the plan to blow up JFK International Airport.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we've been able to discover those, but we know full well from those in our intelligence operations and the Department of Homeland Security that we are, as Mr. HOEKSTRA said, blind and deaf, and I believe that we need to make sure we defeat the previous question so that we'll be in a position to amend this proposal so that we can ensure that we have the tools necessary to win this war on terror.

So vote ''no'' on the previous question.

AMENDMENT TO H. RES. 583 OFFERED BY MR. DRIER OF CALIFORNIA

Strike all after the resolved clause and insert the following:

That upon the adoption of this resolution it shall be in order to consider in the House the bill (H.R. 2956) to require the Secretary of Defense to commence the reduction of the number of United States Armed Forces in Iraq to a limited presence by April 1, 2008, and for other purposes. All points of order against consideration of the bill are waived except those arising under clause 9 or 10 of rule XXI. The bill shall be considered as read. The previous question shall be considered as ordered on the bill to final passage without intervening motion except: (1) four hours of debate, with three hours equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Armed Services and one hour equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Foreign Affairs; (2) the amendment in the nature of a substitute printed in section 3 of this resolution, if offered by the gentleman from Michigan, Mr. Hoekstra, or his designee, which shall be in order without intervention of any point of order except those arising under clause 9 or 10 of rule XXI, shall be considered as read, and shall be separately debatable for two hours equally divided and controlled by the proponent and an opponent; and (3) one motion to recommit with or without instructions.

SEC. 2. During consideration of H.R. 2956 pursuant to this resolution, notwithstanding the operation of the previous question, the Chair may postpone further consideration of the bill to such time as may be designated by the Speaker.

SEC. 3. The amendment in the nature of a substitute to be offered by Mr. Hoekstra of Michigan, or his designee, referred to in section 1 is as follows:

Strike all after the enacting clause and insert the following:

Subsection (f) of section 101 of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act of 1978 (50 U.S.C. 1801) is amended to read as follows—

''(f) 'Electronic surveillance' means—

''(1) the installation or use of an electronic, mechanical, or other surveillance device for acquiring information by intentionally directing surveillance at a particular known person who is reasonably believed to be in the United States under circumstances in which that person has a reasonable expectation of privacy and a warrant would be required for law enforcement purposes; or

''(2) the intentional acquisition of the contents of any communication under circumstances in which a person has a reasonable expectation of privacy and a warrant would be required for law enforcement purposes, if both the sender and all intended recipients are reasonably believed to be located within the United States.''

COMPARISON OF 110TH TO 109TH TYPES OF AMENDMENT PROCESSES FOR BILL CONSIDERED BY THE HOUSE THROUGH JULY 12, 2005 (EXCLUDING MEASURES CONSIDERED BY SUSPENSION OR UC) CURRENT AS OF JULY 12, 2007

109th—Through July 12, 2005		110th—To date	
	Percent		Percent
Open: 12 (including approps)	27.3	6 (including approps)	9.4
Modified Open: 0	0	7	10.95
Structured: 21	47.7	25	39
Closed: 11	25	26	40.6
Total: 44	100	64	100
Open: 12 (including approps)	27.3	6 (including approps)	9.4
Restrictive: 32	72.7	58	90.6
Total: 44	100	64	100

*Prepared by the Committee on Rules Republican Staff.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, once again, we're always treated to the inventive memory of the former Chair of the Rules Committee.

Let me just state for the record that this time last when he was Chair, we had three open rules. At this time, we've had eight open rules.

I urge a ''yes'' vote on the previous question and also on the rule.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time, and I move the previous question on the resolution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on ordering the previous question.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

RECORDED VOTE

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, I demand a recorded vote.

A recorded vote was ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 and clause 9 of rule XX, this 15-minute vote on ordering the previous question will be followed by 5-minute votes on adoption of H. Res. 533, if ordered; and approval of the Journal.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—ayes 225, noes 197, not voting 9, as follows:

[Roll No. 620]

AYES—225

Abercrombie
Ackerman
Allen
Altmire
Andrews
Arcuri
Baca
Baird
Baldwin
Bean
Becerra
Berman
Berry
Bishop (GA)
Bishop (NY)
Blumenauer
Boren
Boswell
Boucher
Boyd (FL)
Boyda (KS)
Brady (PA)
Braley (IA)
Brown, Corrine
Butterfield
Capps
Capuano
Cardoza
Carnahan
Carson
Castor
Chandler
Clarke
Clay
Cleaver
Clyburn
Cohen
Conyers
Cooper
Costa
Costello
Courtney
Cramer
Crowley
Cuellar
Cummings
Davis (AL)
Davis (CA)
Davis (IL)
Davis, Lincoln
DeFazio
DeGette
Delahunt
DeLauro
Dicks
Dingell
Doggett
Donnelly
Doyle
Edwards
Ellison
Ellsworth
Emanuel
Engel
Eshoo
Etheridge
Farr
Fattah
Filner
Frank (MA)
Giffords
Gillibrand
Gonzalez
Gordon
Green, Al
Green, Gene
Grijalva
Gutierrez
Hall (NY)
Hare
Harman
Hastings (FL)
Herseth Sandlin
Higgins
Hill
Hinchey
Hinojosa
Hirono
Hodes
Holden
Holt
Honda
Hooley
Hoyer
Inslee
Israel
Jackson (IL)
Jackson-Lee (TX)
Jefferson
Johnson (GA)
Johnson, E. B.
Jones (NC)
Jones (OH)
Kagen
Kanjorski
Kaptur
Kennedy
Kildee
Kilpatrick
Kind
Klein (FL)
Lampson
Langevin
Lantos
Larsen (WA)
Larson (CT)
Lee
Levin
Lewis (GA)
Lipinski
Loebsack
Lofgren, Zoe
Lowey
Lynch
Mahoney (FL)
Maloney (NY)
Markey
Matheson
Matsui
McCarthy (NY)
McCollum (MN)
McDermott
McGovern
McIntyre
McNerney
McNulty
Meek (FL)
Meeks (NY)
Melancon
Michaud
Miller (NC)
Miller, George
Mitchell
Mollohan
Moore (KS)
Moore (WI)
Moran (VA)
Murphy (CT)
Murphy, Patrick
Murtha
Nadler
Napolitano
Neal (MA)
Oberstar
Obey
Olver
Ortiz
Pallone
Pascrell
Pastor
Payne
Perlmutter
Peterson (MN)
Pomeroy
Price (NC)
Rahall
Rangel
Reyes
Rodriguez
Ross
Rothman
Roybal-Allard
Ruppersberger
Rush
Ryan (OH)
Salazar
Sánchez, Linda T.
Sanchez, Loretta
Sarbanes
Schakowsky
Schiff
Schwartz
Scott (GA)
Scott (VA)
Serrano
Sestak
Shea-Porter
Sherman
Shuler
Sires
Skelton
Slaughter
Smith (WA)
Snyder
Solis
Space
Spratt
Stupak
Sutton
Tanner
Tauscher
Taylor
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Tierney
Towns
Udall (CO)
Udall (NM)
Van Hollen
Velázquez
Visclosky
Walz (MN)
Wasserman Schultz
Waters
Watson
Watt
Waxman
Weiner
Welch (VT)
Wexler
Wilson (OH)
Woolsey
Wu
Wynn
Yarmuth

NOES—197

Aderholt
Akin
Alexander
Bachmann
Bachus
Baker
Barrett (SC)
Barrow
Bartlett (MD)
Barton (TX)
Biggert
Bilbray
Bilirakis
Bishop (UT)
Blackburn
Blunt
Boehner
Bonner
Bono
Boozman
Boustany
Brady (TX)
Brown (SC)
Brown-Waite, Ginny
Buchanan
Burgess
Burton (IN)
Buyer
Calvert
Camp (MI)
Campbell (CA)
Cannon
Cantor
Capito
Carney
Carter
Castle
Chabot
Coble
Cole (OK)
Conaway
Crenshaw
Culberson
Davis (KY)
Davis, David
Davis, Tom
Deal (GA)
Dent
Diaz-Balart, L.
Diaz-Balart, M.
Doolittle
Drake
Dreier
Duncan
Ehlers
Emerson
English (PA)
Everett
Fallin
Feeney
Ferguson
Flake
Forbes
Fortenberry
Fossella
Foxx
Franks (AZ)
Frelinghuysen
Gallegly
Garrett (NJ)
Gerlach
Gilchrest
Gillmor
Gingrey
Gohmert
Goode
Goodlatte
Granger
Graves
Hall (TX)
Hastert
Hastings (WA)
Hayes
Heller
Hensarling
Herger
Hobson
Hoekstra
Hulshof
Hunter
Inglis (SC)
Issa
Johnson (IL)
Johnson, Sam
Keller
King (IA)
King (NY)
Kingston
Kirk
Kline (MN)
Knollenberg
Kuhl (NY)
LaHood
Lamborn
Latham
LaTourette
Lewis (CA)
Lewis (KY)
Linder
LoBiondo
Lucas
Lungren, Daniel E.
Mack
Manzullo
Marchant
Marshall
McCarthy (CA)
McCaul (TX)
McCotter
McCrery
McHenry
McHugh
McKeon
McMorris Rodgers
Mica
Miller (FL)
Miller (MI)
Miller, Gary
Moran (KS)
Murphy, Tim
Musgrave
Myrick
Neugebauer
Nunes
Paul
Pearce
Pence
Peterson (PA)
Petri
Pickering
Pitts
Platts
Poe
Porter
Price (GA)
Pryce (OH)
Putnam
Radanovich
Ramstad
Regula
Rehberg
Reichert
Renzi
Reynolds
Rogers (AL)
Rogers (KY)
Rogers (MI)
Rohrabacher
Ros-Lehtinen
Roskam
Royce
Ryan (WI)
Sali
Saxton
Schmidt
Sensenbrenner
Sessions
Shadegg
Shays
Shimkus
Shuster
Simpson
Smith (NE)
Smith (NJ)
Smith (TX)
Souder
Stearns
Sullivan
Terry
Thornberry
Tiahrt
Tiberi
Turner
Upton
Walberg
Walden (OR)
Walsh (NY)
Wamp
Weldon (FL)
Weller
Westmoreland
Whitfield
Wicker
Wilson (NM)
Wilson (SC)
Wolf
Young (FL)

NOT VOTING—9

Berkley
Cubin
Davis, Jo Ann
Jindal
Jordan
Kucinich
Stark
Tancredo
Young (AK)

□ 1204

Mr. GRAVES changed his vote from ''aye'' to ''no.''

So the previous question was ordered.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

Stated against:

Mr. JORDAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I was absent from the House floor during today's rollcall vote on ordering the previous question on the rule, H. Res. 533, for H.R. 2956.

Had I been present, I would have voted "no."

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the resolution.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. This will be a 5-minute vote.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 221, nays 196, not voting 14, as follows:

[Roll No. 621]

YEAS—221

Abercrombie
Ackerman
Allen
Altmire
Andrews
Arcuri
Baca
Baldwin
Barrow
Bean
Becerra
Berman
Berry
Bishop (GA)
Bishop (NY)
Blumenauer
Boren
Boswell
Boucher
Boyd (FL)
Boyda (KS)
Brady (PA)
Braley (IA)
Brown, Corrine
Butterfield
Capps
Capuano
Cardoza
Carnahan
Carson
Castor
Chandler
Clarke
Clay
Cleaver
Clyburn
Cohen
Conyers
Cooper
Costa
Costello
Courtney
Cramer
Crowley
Cuellar
Cummings
Davis (AL)
Davis (CA)
Davis (IL)
Davis, Lincoln
DeFazio
DeGette
Delahunt
DeLauro
Dicks
Dingell
Doggett
Donnelly
Doyle
Edwards
Ellison
Ellsworth
Emanuel
Engel
Eshoo
Etheridge
Farr
Fattah
Filner
Frank (MA)
Giffords
Gillibrand
Gonzalez
Gordon
Green, Al
Green, Gene
Grijalva
Gutierrez
Hall (NY)
Hare
Harman
Hastings (FL)
Herseth Sandlin
Higgins
Hill
Hinchey
Hinojosa
Hirono
Hodes
Holden
Holt
Honda
Hooley
Hoyer
Inslee
Israel
Jackson (IL)
Jackson-Lee (TX)
Jefferson
Johnson (GA)
Johnson, E. B.
Jones (OH)
Kagen
Kanjorski
Kaptur
Kennedy
Kildee
Kilpatrick
Kind
Klein (FL)
Lampson
Langevin
Lantos
Larsen (WA)
Larson (CT)
Lee
Levin
Lewis (GA)
Lipinski
Loebsack
Lofgren, Zoe
Lowey
Lynch
Mahoney (FL)
Maloney (NY)
Markey
Matheson
Matsui
McCarthy (NY)
McCollum (MN)
McDermott
McGovern
McIntyre
McNerney
McNulty
Meek (FL)
Meeks (NY)
Melancon
Michaud
Miller (NC)
Miller, George
Mitchell
Mollohan
Moore (KS)
Moore (WI)
Moran (VA)
Murphy (CT)
Murphy, Patrick
Murtha
Nadler
Napolitano
Neal (MA)
Oberstar
Obey
Olver
Ortiz
Pallone
Pascrell
Pastor
Payne
Perlmutter
Peterson (MN)
Pomeroy
Price (NC)
Rahall
Rangel
Reyes
Rodriguez
Ross
Rothman
Roybal-Allard
Ruppersberger
Rush
Ryan (OH)
Salazar
Sánchez, Linda T.
Sanchez, Loretta
Sarbanes
Schakowsky
Schiff
Schwartz
Scott (GA)
Scott (VA)
Serrano
Shea-Porter
Sherman
Shuler
Sires
Skelton
Slaughter
Smith (WA)
Snyder
Solis
Space
Spratt
Stupak
Sutton
Tanner
Tauscher
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Tierney
Towns
Udall (CO)
Udall (NM)
Van Hollen
Velázquez
Visclosky
Walz (MN)
Wasserman Schultz
Waters
Watson
Watt
Waxman
Weiner
Welch (VT)
Wexler
Woolsey
Wu
Wynn
Yarmuth

NAYS—196

Aderholt
Akin
Alexander
Bachmann
Bachus
Baird
Baker
Barrett (SC)
Bartlett (MD)
Barton (TX)
Biggert
Bilbray
Bilirakis
Bishop (UT)
Blackburn
Blunt
Boehner
Bonner
Bono
Boozman
Boustany
Brady (TX)
Brown (SC)
Brown-Waite, Ginny
Buchanan
Burgess

Burton (IN)
Buyer
Calvert
Camp (MI)
Campbell (CA)
Cannon
Cantor
Capito
Carney
Carter
Castle
Chabot
Coble
Conaway
Crenshaw
Culberson
Davis (KY)
Davis, David
Davis, Tom
Deal (GA)
Dent
Diaz-Balart, L.
Diaz-Balart, M.
Doolittle
Drake
Dreier
Duncan
Ehlers
Emerson
English (PA)
Everett
Fallin
Feeney
Ferguson
Flake
Forbes
Fortenberry
Fossella
Foxx
Franks (AZ)
Frelinghuysen
Gallegly
Garrett (NJ)
Gerlach
Gilchrest
Gillmor
Gingrey
Gohmert
Goode
Goodlatte
Granger
Graves
Hall (TX)
Hastert
Hastings (WA)
Hayes
Heller
Hensarling
Herger
Hobson
Hoekstra
Hulshof
Hunter
Inglis (SC)
Issa
Johnson (IL)
Johnson, Sam
Jones (NC)
Jordan
Keller
King (IA)
King (NY)
Kingston
Kirk
Kline (MN)
Knollenberg
Kuhl (NY)
LaHood
Lamborn
Latham
LaTourette
Lewis (KY)
Linder
LoBiondo
Lucas
Lungren, Daniel E.
Mack
Manzullo
Marchant
Marshall
McCarthy (CA)
McCaul (TX)
McCotter
McCrery
McHenry
McHugh
McKeon
McMorris Rodgers
Mica
Miller (FL)
Miller (MI)
Miller, Gary
Moran (KS)
Murphy, Tim
Myrick
Neugebauer
Nunes
Paul
Pearce
Pence
Peterson (PA)
Petri
Pitts
Platts
Poe
Porter
Price (GA)
Pryce (OH)
Putnam
Radanovich
Ramstad
Regula
Rehberg
Reichert
Renzi
Reynolds
Rogers (AL)
Rogers (KY)
Rogers (MI)
Rohrabacher
Ros-Lehtinen
Roskam
Royce
Ryan (WI)
Sali
Schmidt
Sensenbrenner
Sessions
Sestak
Shadegg
Shays
Shimkus
Shuster
Simpson
Smith (NE)
Smith (NJ)
Smith (TX)
Souder
Stearns
Sullivan
Taylor
Terry
Thornberry
Tiahrt
Tiberi
Turner
Upton
Walberg
Walden (OR)
Walsh (NY)
Wamp
Weldon (FL)
Weller
Westmoreland
Whitfield
Wicker
Wilson (NM)
Wilson (SC)
Wolf
Young (FL)

NOT VOTING—14

Berkley
Cole (OK)
Cubin
Davis, Jo Ann
Jindal
Kucinich
Lewis (CA)
Musgrave
Pickering
Saxton
Stark
Tancredo
Wilson (OH)
Young (AK)

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (during the vote). Members are advised that 2 minutes remain for this vote.

□ 1210

So the resolution was agreed to.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the unfinished business is the question on agreeing to the Speaker's approval of the Journal, on which the yeas and nays were ordered.

The question is on the Speaker's approval of the Journal.

This will be a 5-minute vote.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 240, nays 178, answered ''present'' 1, not voting 12, as follows:

[Roll No. 622]

YEAS—240

Abercrombie
Ackerman
Aderholt
Akin
Alexander
Allen
Andrews
Arcuri
Baca
Bachmann
Baker
Baldwin
Bean
Becerra
Berman
Berry
Biggert
Bilbray
Bishop (GA)
Bishop (NY)
Blumenauer
Bono
Boozman
Boswell
Boucher
Boyd (FL)
Brady (PA)
Braley (IA)
Brown, Corrine
Butterfield
Capito
Capps
Capuano
Cardoza
Carnahan
Carson
Castle
Castor
Clarke
Clay
Cleaver
Clyburn
Coble
Cohen
Conyers
Cooper
Costa
Costello
Courtney
Crenshaw
Crowley
Cummings
Davis (AL)
Davis (CA)
Davis (IL)
Davis, Lincoln
Davis, Tom
DeFazio
DeGette
Delahunt
DeLauro
Dent
Dicks
Dingell
Doggett
Doolittle
Doyle
Edwards
Ellison
Emanuel
Emerson
Engel
Eshoo
Etheridge
Everett
Farr
Fattah
Filner
Fortenberry
Frank (MA)
Gillmor
Gonzalez
Goodlatte
Gordon
Green, Al
Green, Gene
Grijalva
Gutierrez
Hall (NY)
Hare
Harman
Hastings (FL)
Hastings (WA)
Higgins
Hill
Hinchey
Hinojosa
Hirono
Hodes
Holden
Holt
Honda
Hooley
Hoyer
Hulshof
Inslee
Israel
Jackson (IL)
Jackson-Lee (TX)
Jefferson
Johnson (GA)
Johnson (IL)
Johnson, E. B.
Jones (NC)
Jones (OH)
Kanjorski
Kaptur
Kennedy
Kildee
Kilpatrick
Kind
Kingston
Klein (FL)
Kuhl (NY)
Lampson
Langevin
Lantos
Larson (CT)
LaTourette
Lee
Levin
Lewis (GA)
Lipinski
Loebsack
Lofgren, Zoe
Lowey
Lynch
Mack
Maloney (NY)
Markey
Matsui
McCarthy (NY)
McCaul (TX)
McCollum (MN)
McDermott
McGovern
McIntyre
McMorris Rodgers
McNulty
Meek (FL)
Meeks (NY)
Michaud
Miller (NC)
Miller, George
Mitchell
Mollohan
Moore (WI)
Moran (VA)
Murphy (CT)
Murphy, Patrick
Murtha
Nadler
Napolitano
Neal (MA)
Oberstar
Obey
Olver
Ortiz
Pallone
Pascrell
Paul
Payne
Petri
Pickering
Pomeroy
Price (NC)
Rahall
Rangel
Rehberg
Reyes
Reynolds
Rodriguez
Ross
Rothman
Roybal-Allard
Ruppersberger
Rush
Ryan (OH)
Salazar
Sánchez, Linda T.
Sanchez, Loretta
Sarbanes
Schakowsky
Schiff
Schwartz
Scott (GA)
Scott (VA)
Serrano
Sessions
Sestak
Shea-Porter
Sherman
Shimkus
Sires
Skelton
Smith (WA)
Snyder
Solis
Souder
Spratt
Stark
Sutton
Tanner
Tauscher
Taylor
Terry
Thompson (MS)
Thornberry
Tiahrt
Tierney
Towns
Udall (NM)
Van Hollen
Velázquez
Visclosky
Walsh (NY)
Wasserman Schultz
Waters
Watson
Watt
Waxman
Weiner
Welch (VT)
Wexler
Whitfield
Wilson (NM)
Wilson (OH)
Wilson (SC)
Woolsey
Wynn

NAYS—178

Altmire
Bachus
Baird
Barrett (SC)
Barrow
Bartlett (MD)
Barton (TX)
Bilirakis
Bishop (UT)
Blackburn
Blunt
Boehner
Bonner
Boren
Boustany
Boyda (KS)
Brady (TX)
Brown (SC)
Brown-Waite, Ginny
Buchanan
Burgess
Burton (IN)
Buyer
Calvert
Camp (MI)
Campbell (CA)
Cannon
Cantor
Carney
Carter
Chabot
Chandler
Cole (OK)
Conaway
Cramer
Cuellar
Culberson
Davis (KY)
Davis, David
Deal (GA)
Diaz-Balart, L.
Diaz-Balart, M.
Donnelly
Drake
Dreier
Duncan
Ehlers
Ellsworth
English (PA)
Fallin
Feeney
Ferguson
Flake
Forbes
Fossella
Foxx
Franks (AZ)
Frelinghuysen
Gallegly
Garrett (NJ)
Gerlach
Giffords
Gilchrest
Gillibrand
Gingrey
Goode
Granger
Graves
Hall (TX)
Hastert
Hayes
Heller
Hensarling
Herger
Herseth Sandlin
Hobson
Hoekstra
Hunter
Inglis (SC)
Issa
Johnson, Sam
Jordan
Kagen
Keller
King (IA)
King (NY)
Kirk
Kline (MN)
Knollenberg
LaHood
Lamborn
Larsen (WA)
Latham
Lewis (CA)
Lewis (KY)
Linder
LoBiondo
Lucas
Lungren, Daniel E.
Mahoney (FL)
Manzullo
Marchant
Matheson
McCarthy (CA)
McCotter
McCrery
McHenry
McHugh
McKeon
Melancon
Mica
Miller (FL)
Miller (MI)
Miller, Gary
Moore (KS)
Moran (KS)
Musgrave
Myrick
Neugebauer
Nunes
Pastor
Pearce
Pence
Perlmutter
Peterson (MN)
Peterson (PA)
Pitts
Platts
Poe
Porter
Price (GA)
Pryce (OH)
Putnam
Radanovich
Ramstad
Regula
Reichert
Renzi
Rogers (AL)
Rogers (KY)
Rogers (MI)
Rohrabacher
Ros-Lehtinen
Roskam
Royce
Ryan (WI)
Sali
Saxton
Schmidt
Sensenbrenner
Shadegg
Shays
Shuler
Shuster
Smith (NE)
Smith (NJ)
Smith (TX)
Space
Stearns
Stupak
Sullivan
Thompson (CA)
Tiberi
Turner
Udall (CO)
Upton
Walberg
Walden (OR)
Walz (MN)
Wamp
Weldon (FL)
Weller
Westmoreland
Wicker
Wolf
Wu
Yarmuth
Young (FL)

ANSWERED ''PRESENT''—1

Gohmert

NOT VOTING—12

Berkley
Cubin
Davis, Jo Ann
Jindal
Kucinich
Marshall
McNerney
Murphy, Tim
Simpson
Slaughter
Tancredo
Young (AK)

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (during the vote). Members are advised there are 2 minutes remaining in this vote.

□ 1217

So the Journal was approved.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

RESPONSIBLE REDEPLOYMENT FROM IRAQ ACT

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to House Resolution 533, I call up the bill (H.R. 2956) to require the Secretary of Defense to commence the reduction of the number of United States Armed Forces in Iraq to a limited presence by April 1, 2008, and for other purposes, and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 2956

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act''.

SEC. 2. SENSE OF CONGRESS.

It is the sense of Congress that—

(1) the Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution of 2002 (Public Law 107–243), enacted into law on October 16, 2002, authorized the President to use the Armed Forces as the President determined necessary and appropriate in order to defend the national security of the United States against the continuing threat posed by the Government of Iraq at that time;

(2) the Government of Iraq which was in power at the time the Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution of 2002 was enacted into law has been removed from power and its leader indicted, tried, convicted, and executed by the new freely-elected democratic Government of Iraq;

(3) the current Government of Iraq does not pose a threat to the United States or its interests; and

(4) after more than four years of valiant efforts by members of the Armed Forces and United States civilians, the Government of Iraq must now be responsible for Iraq's future course.

SEC. 3. REQUIREMENT TO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF ARMED FORCES IN IRAQ AND TRANSITION TO A LIMITED PRESENCE OF THE ARMED FORCES IN IRAQ.

(a) REQUIREMENT.—The Secretary of Defense shall commence the reduction of the number of Armed Forces in Iraq beginning not later than 120 days after the date of the enactment of this Act and shall complete the reduction and transition to a limited presence of the Armed Forces in Iraq by not later than April 1, 2008.

(b) REDUCTION AND TRANSITION TO BE CARRIED OUT IN A SAFE AND ORDERLY MANNER.—The reduction of the number of Armed Forces in Iraq and transition to a limited presence of the Armed Forces in Iraq required by subsection (a) shall be implemented in a safe and orderly manner, with maximum attention paid to protection of the Armed Forces that are being redeployed from Iraq.

(c) REDUCTION AND TRANSITION TO FURTHER COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGY.—The reduction of the number of Armed Forces in Iraq and transition to a limited presence of the Armed Forces in Iraq required by subsection (a) shall further be implemented as part of the comprehensive United States strategy for Iraq required by section 4 of this Act.

SEC. 4. COMPREHENSIVE UNITED STATES STRATEGY FOR IRAQ.

(a) STRATEGY REQUIRED.—Not later than January 1, 2008, the President shall transmit to the appropriate congressional committees a comprehensive United States strategy for Iraq.

(b) MATTERS TO BE INCLUDED.—The strategy required by subsection (a) shall include the following:

(1) A discussion of United States national security interests in Iraq and the broader Middle East region and the diplomatic, political, economic, and military components of a comprehensive strategy to maintain and advance such interests as the Armed Forces are redeployed from Iraq pursuant to section 3 of this Act.

(2) A justification of the minimum force levels required to protect United States national security interests in Iraq after April 1, 2008, including a description of the specific missions of the Armed Forces to be undertaken. The justification shall include—

(A) the projected number of Armed Forces necessary to carry out the missions;

(B) the projected annual cost of the missions; and

(C) the expected duration of the missions.

(3) As part of the justification required by paragraph (2), the President shall, at a minimum, address whether it is necessary for the Armed Forces to carry out the following missions:

(A) Protecting United States diplomatic facilities and United States citizens, including members of the Armed Forces who are engaged in carrying out other missions.

(B) Serving in roles consistent with customary diplomatic positions.

(C) Engaging in actions to disrupt and eliminate al-Qaeda and its affiliated organizations in Iraq.

(D) Training and equipping members of the Iraqi Security Forces.

(4) Specific plans for diplomatic initiatives to engage United States allies and others in the region to bring stability to Iraq.

(c) UPDATE OF STRATEGY.—Not later than July 1, 2008, and every 90 days thereafter, the President shall transmit to the appropriate congressional committees an update of the strategy required by subsection (a), including a description of the number of Armed Forces deployed to Iraq and the missions for which such Armed Forces are so deployed.

(d) FORM.—The strategy required by subsection (a) and each update of the strategy required by subsection (c) shall be transmitted in unclassified form, but may contain a classified annex, if necessary.

(e) APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES DEFINED.—In this section, the term ''appropriate congressional committees'' means—

(1) the Committee on Armed Services, the Committee on Appropriations, and the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives; and

(2) the Committee on Armed Services, the Committee on Appropriations, and the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate.

SEC. 5. ARMED FORCES DEFINED.

In this Act, the term ''Armed Forces'' has the meaning given the term in section 101 of title 10, United States Code.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CARDOZA). Pursuant to House Resolution 533, debate shall not exceed 4 hours, with 3 hours equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Armed Services and 1 hour equally divided and controlled by the chairman and the ranking minority member of the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

The gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON) and the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER) each will control 90 minutes, and the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS) and the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Missouri.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support for the Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act.

Mr. Speaker, out of all of this Iraq business, there's one star, and that star, as every American should know and appreciate, is the young American in uniform. That is the purpose of this legislation, and I take this opportunity to compliment those who serve our country wherever they may be, those in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere in the world or here within our United States. I'm proud of them. And they are our stars.

Mr. Speaker, we have been engaged in Iraq since March of 2003. And in hearing discussion on the rule, it's obvious that some people wish to confuse the effort in Afghanistan with the effort in Iraq. They are separate and distinct.

The war in Afghanistan is something that we needed to do. The Taliban government gave sanctuary to the al Qaeda terrorists in that country of Afghanistan, and we did the right thing by going in there.

The war in Iraq is one of choice. There have been discussions and difficulty and debate over how we got there, but we are there. But people should know that the insurgency in Iraq and the subsequent sectarian violence between the Shiite and Sunni is a different and distinct war from that in Afghanistan.

You know, in history, we learn from the past. Strategic mistakes have been made, and we're supposed to learn from that. And we have to go to our revolution in 1776, when the British General Howell did not follow up his victories against George Washington's troops on Long Island. Consequently, George Washington's troops were able to encamp at Valley Forge and later attack successfully Trenton and New Jersey. That was a strategic mistake that allowed our revolution to be successful.

Lee's invasion of the north, the battles of Antietam and Gettysburg, were strategic mistakes of the Confederacy.

And, Mr. Speaker, sadly, we have seen not only strategic mistakes in Iraq, we have seen irretrievable strategic mistakes; no plan for the aftermath, the initial victory, the number of troops was not as General Shinseki recommended, far too few; the unguarded caches of weapons and ammunition, allowing the insurgency to have free access to them; the dismissal of the Iraqi Army, rather than giving them a pay check and a shovel, the closing of the Iraqi industries, the deBaathification, which put thousands of people out of work, including thousands of school teachers. These irretrievable mistakes made it very difficult for us to have any sort of positive success in that country.

We hear the call, well, wait until September. There'll be another report. Well, we have been in Iraq for four Septembers. There is the old song that those of us with a little gray in our hair remember as the September song. And one line from that song of yesteryear, ''we haven't got time for the waiting game.'' That's where we are now. We don't have time for the waiting game.

The purpose of this is a matter of readiness. It's a matter of national security. It's a matter that we must face now, or else the strain and stretch on our ground forces, particularly the Army and, of course, the Marines, will be beyond repair for many, many years.

It's a matter of strategic importance that we redeploy from Iraq in a responsible manner, and that's what this bill does. And we are able to keep our forces strong.

We never know what's going to happen. The last 30 years, we've had 12 military contingencies in which our Armed Forces have been engaged, four

of which have been major in size; none of them predictable. We don't know what the future holds. But for national security interests, we need to have a ready force, particularly our ground forces, which are being strained so very much now.

Further, it is important that we pass the security of Iraq over to the Iraqi government and to the security forces of that country. We cannot hold their hand forever. They must step up to the plate and take over their own security. It's important that that happen.

This bill, Mr. Speaker, initially sets forth a sense of Congress that the authorization for use of military force against Iraq was enacted into law in October of 2002, and that the government of Iraq that was in power at that time has been removed and it's leader tried, convicted and executed by a freely elected government of Iraq; and further, that the government of Iraq, the current government of Iraq does not pose a threat to the United States, and for more than 4 years, the efforts of our Armed Forces have been valiant in their work and in their combat in that country.

We need a responsible redeployment. This legislation gives it to us. It states that the Secretary of Defense shall commence the reduction of the number of armed forces in that country beginning not later than 120 days after the date of enactment. It also states that such redeployment shall be complete to a limited presence which is spelled out in the bill, not later than April 1, 2008.

The question before us, are we, as a country, any safer now than we were when we went into Iraq in March of 2003? What has it done for the security of our country?

We see the sectarian violence, on top of the insurgency, the insurgency being aided by foreign fighters, many of them al Qaeda, and consequently, we know that the end must be done by the Iraqi security forces. That's what we are trying to do in this legislation; responsible redeployment of the American forces, cause the Iraqi troops and forces to take over their own security, and restore the readiness to our ground forces here in the United States.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

□ 1230

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, following my remarks and Mr. SKELTON's remarks, I understand we are going to yield to the Foreign Affairs Committee, and I would yield an additional 15 minutes of my time to the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) and also I would yield 30 minutes of my time to the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. SHADEGG) and that he may be allowed to yield time in turn.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, time may be so controlled.

There was no objection.

Mr. HUNTER. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

First, I want to express my great respect for my colleague, the chairman of the Armed Services Committee, a partner on many, many legislative endeavors and a gentleman who really has the welfare of the troops of the United States in his heart when he speaks and when he legislates.

But, Mr. Speaker, let me say this about this piece of legislation which has been brought by the Democrat leadership before this House. This is an attempt once again to stampede a retreat from Iraq, and it is a gratuitous attempt to do this. There is no reason, only 3½ weeks after the surge of troops has been put in place, to now race for the borders, to demand that the President start to wind up this operation and start to leave, especially when General Petraeus will be making recommendations to us on September 15. There is no reason to do this. And I am reminded of when the surge was first announced and I was on the floor in a discussion with a good colleague from the Democrat side, the day after the surge had been announced when only a few people were even in country from this increase in forces, and she said, There has been a car bombing and that proves the surge doesn't work. And she was ready to immediately start a retreat from the country, and I take it a number of folks on that side of the aisle were willing to do that.

There is no reason to do this. We have an interim report which has just come out. The interim report says that in the 18 areas of interest in which progress has to be registered, there has been progress on eight of them, there has been unsatisfactory progress on eight of them, and on two of them it is too early to really make an evaluation. Well, that is the interim report. And on September 15 we will get a further report.

And as I look at the important things, the things that to me are important in this report, one thing that is very important is the fact that when we needed to get the three additional brigades and that additional troop strength into Baghdad from the Iraqi Army, we got them there. Even though they didn't show up early on 1½ years ago, this time they showed up. Mr. Maliki was good on his commitment. They got there. So things that were important to me with respect to this report are being accomplished.

But the facts are we are only 27 days into this surge. And the Democrat resolution really spells out no plan whatsoever. It asks the President to come up with yet another plan, which is highly interesting since he has a plan and since General Petraeus has stated that he will recommend adjustments on September 15. So if there are adjustments to make to the plan, they should come after General Petraeus appears before us and gives us his recommended adjustments.

So what are we doing here? Well, what we are really doing is counting votes. This is basically an attempt by the Democrat leadership to get a hard vote count, see if any more people have slipped, if there are any more votes on their side of the aisle so that they will be able to tee this thing up and have another vote, hopefully, from their perspective, to forward their goal, which is to start a retreat from Iraq as soon as possible.

There is not a single recommendation in the resolution that is offered by my good friend. There is no recommendation for a new strategy. There is simply a series of questions asked of the administration, and those questions can all best be answered when General Petraeus comes before us.

So, Mr. Speaker, there are two messages that I see coming from Iraq; and we all see in this very complex, very difficult mission lots of messages. A message I saw the other day came from a senior Marine leader. Do you know what it said? It said, ''We are crushing the enemy in Anbar.'' And then a few minutes later, I saw a message from the Democrat leadership that said, ''We have to get out now.'' I have seen the Democrat leadership many times say, We are going to end this war. Mr. Speaker, they don't have the ability to end this war. No American has the ability to end this war. What they do have if they gain enough power is only the ability to leave this battlefield.

Let's not stampede for the border, Mr. Speaker. This is not a time to make a precipitous decision to start ordering the President on a policy that is going to be reported on on September 15. Let's keep our stability. Let's make sure that we don't pass this gratuitous piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker, which really is nothing more than a vote count for the Democrat leadership.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this legislation and yield myself such time as I might consume.

Mr. Speaker, in Iraq today a misguided war is raging in our country's name. We in this Congress and the American people across the country are filled with admiration for the heroism and sacrifice of our soldiers on the battlefield. But we cannot fathom the mindless stubbornness of the administration fixated on illusory aids. It is pathologically preoccupied with pursuing that despite all the evidence of how destructive the situation has become.

Mr. Speaker, we have seen this movie before, quite literally, as any classic film buff knows: ''The Bridge on the River Kwai,'' an Academy Award-winning tale based on real events in World War II. Alec Guinness plays a British colonel mesmerized and hypnotized by the goal of building a bridge that will last through the ages even though doing so will only strengthen the enemy. For a while Alec Guinness persuades his fellow prisoners of war that completing his weird project will leave a legacy of which they can be proud.

But it soon becomes clear that the real goal is to build a monument to himself as he looks back on his few true achievements in life.

At one point this antihero tells his men, We can teach these barbarians a lesson in Western methods and efficiency that will put them to shame. Mr. Speaker, at this point the audience knows where the real shame lies.

The American people know that what happens by our hand in Iraq will be our legacy. We are no longer willing to tolerate keeping our sons and daughters in the midst of a sectarian civil war. The war in Iraq was launched by an administration using faulty intelligence and mesmerized by a dream of some sort of monument to democracy in the Middle East with Iraq at its center. It is past time to stop enabling the construction of this folly.

The legislation before us directs that the redeployment of U.S. forces in Iraq be carried out in a safe and orderly manner. It sets a time certain by which that should start, and it is clearly intended to bring about a major reduction in our troop presence by April of next year. And in the meantime, our legislation will compel the administration to come up with something which amazingly enough to date it hasn't had: a comprehensive strategy for Iraq addressing our national security interests not only there but in the entire region and the ways to maintain our interests even as this redeployment is carried out.

Mr. Speaker, today the administration issued its interim report on the troop escalation in Iraq. Though the White House chooses to focus on the benchmarks that have been met in what it calls a ''satisfactory'' way, the assessment, in fact, shows that Iraq has made unsatisfactory progress on half of the 18 political and military goals that Congress set for Iraq this spring.

The people of Iraq and our fighting forces there know the situation all too well. The index of progress that they face each day tells them much more than a 25-page report can ever say. With every car bomb that takes a civilian toll, every insurgent's bullet that finds its mark, every roadside explosive that maims or kills one of our own brave men and women in uniform, the sacrifices mount; and the result is anything but satisfactory.

This is why, Mr. Speaker, our measure deserves our full and unwavering support. We need to direct a misguided administration to face reality and to start the responsible redeployment of our forces from Iraq. By asking this Congress to extend our patience yet again, by pointlessly risking our troops, and by continuing to ignore the will of the American people to end this war, the administration is reaching for a bridge much too far.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to this bill, which seeks to impose a strategy of defeat on our Armed Forces and our country. By binding our military and our foreign policy in a straitjacket, this legislation would accomplish what thousands of our enemies have sought: to force the United States to retreat from Iraq without a plan for victory.

Proponents of rapid withdrawal would like us to ignore the reality that Iraq is but one of the critical battlefields in an ongoing war against Islamic jihadists, against global terrorism, a war declared by the jihadists and which saw its beginnings in November 1979, when Iranian radicals stormed our embassy, took Americans hostages, and held them captive for 444 days.

From there Americans, Westerners, innocent human beings were targeted. Where and when were they targeted? In the bombings of the Marine barracks in the U.S. embassy in Beirut in 1983, in the bombings of the World Trade Center in 1993, in the bombings of the Khobar Towers in 1996, in the attacks of our embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998, and in the attacks on the USS *Cole* in the year 2000.

Proponents of rapid withdrawal want us to look at the bombings in Iraq in a vacuum, disregarding the similarities to the suicide bombers that have killed scores of innocent Israelis, those who planned and carried out the bombings in London, in Madrid, in Bali that claimed so many innocent lives.

□ 1245

These may not be the exact individuals, nor the same groups, but they are part of a global terrorist network working toward the same end, to destroy and to attack us and our allies.

The Islamic jihadists will not stop their agenda of destruction simply because we quickly withdraw from Iraq. They will, perhaps, stop when they see our nations, our cities, our communities burning, just as the World Trade Center towers and the Pentagon burned on that terrible day of September 11, 2001.

They have clearly articulated their goals, listen to their words; al Qaeda's second in command, Al Zawahiri, made it clear in May of this year, and I quote him: ''The empire of evil, the United States, is about to end and a new dawn is about to break over mankind, which will be liberated from the caesars of the White House and Europe and from the Zionists.''

Those seeking to impose an immediate withdrawal deadline are so intent on rushing through this legislation that they appear to have failed to consider the consequences of a U.S. national security interest of what euphemistically is being called a ''phased redeployment.''

How is the strategy of quick withdrawal different from the strategy outlined by Al Zawahiri in a letter that he sent to al Qaeda operatives about driving the U.S. out of Iraq? How would we prevent the development of Iraq into a full base of operations for al Qaeda and other terrorist networks? We pretend to be armchair generals, seeking to undermine the strategies called for by our commanders on the field. But we should not.

Some label the current strategy of failure long before this full complement of units had been, in fact, deployed. But those doing the fighting in Iraq know that we have not failed, patriots such as the Parsons brothers from my congressional district.

Huber Parsons was serving his third deployment in Iraq, this time with the Army Stryker Brigade, when his vehicle was struck by a deep buried IED just a few months ago. His driver was killed, and Huber had to undergo a number of surgeries. I had the honor of visiting him often at Walter Reed. He is pictured here saluting his fallen brothers-in-arms at a memorial service in Fort Lewis, Washington. His twin, Bill, and his younger brother, Charlie, are both currently serving in Iraq, also with the Army Stryker Brigade. They, like my stepson, Doug, and my daughter-in-law, Lindsay, and so many others who are currently deployed in Iraq, are disheartened when they hear the references to failure and consider that the talks of this rapid withdrawal shows a lack of confidence in their ability to defeat the enemy.

Many patriots ask me why the Congress would endanger them and their fellow service men and women by having them engage the enemy with an immediately reduced force. Where, in a region of jihadists, are troops to be deployed to? What Middle Eastern government would want to host a retreating and defeated American Army? How does withdrawal to Kuwait or Qatar, as some have proposed, help us fight al Qaeda in Iraq? If al Qaeda strategies worked in Iraq and forced an American retreat, how can we not conclude that they will also pursue them in Kuwait and Qatar and beyond?

Mr. Speaker, George Orwell said that the quickest way of ending a war is to lose it. We should be discussing strategies for victory, not how to ensure our own defeat.

And let me close, Mr. Speaker, by reading the words of General Petraeus in an interview just a few days ago word for word. He said, ''I can think of few commanders in history who wouldn't have wanted more troops, more time or more unity among their partners. However, if I could only have one at this point in Iraq, it would be more time. This is an exceedingly tough endeavor that faces countless challenges.'' General Petraeus continues, None of us, Iraqi or American, are anything but impatient and frustrated at where we are. But there are no shortcuts. Success in an endeavor like this is the result of steady, unremittent pressure over the long haul. It is a test of wills, demanding patience, determination and stamina from all involved.

General Petraeus, as we know, was unanimously confirmed by the United States Senate to be our commander in Iraq, yet somehow we have become better war commanders than General Petraeus.

I urge my colleagues to oppose this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to yield 2 minutes to the senior member of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Mr. WEXLER of Florida.

Mr. WEXLER. Thank you, Mr. LANTOS.

Mr. Speaker, President Bush stubbornly refuses to end the war in Iraq. It is up to Congress to step forward and mandate that our troops return home. Congress must deliver to the American people what they voted for in November. It is Congress that must end this disastrous war. At long last, this legislation delivers a responsible withdrawal of American troops.

The stark reality is that the President's escalation strategy has been an utter failure. Instead of a successful surge, the President's policy in Iraq has regressed, and the death toll of American troops and Iraqi civilians has mounted.

This President is unwilling to change course, despite overwhelming American opposition to the war, despite failing to meet political, economic and security benchmarks, and despite calls by Senate Republicans urging a change in course. The President is in denial, and it is time for Congress to deliver a reality check.

Our troops have sacrificed enough. Our military families have suffered enough. American taxpayers have spent enough. Congress must bring our troops home, and this bill does it.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. COBLE).

Mr. COBLE. I thank the gentlelady from Florida for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I voted against the surge. And for 2½ years, I have said that we need to keep the troop withdrawal issue on the table, but I have also said during that time that the date for withdrawal should be reserved for the commanders on the ground.

The bill before us was not introduced until yesterday, and in my opinion, it is vague, at best; generously laced again, in my opinion, with politics.

I excel at an understatement, Mr. Speaker, when I declare that this war has been mismanaged. It was appropriate to remove Saddam, an international terrorist, but there was never, in my opinion, a post-entry strategy; therefore, mismanagement.

The Iraq issue, Mr. Speaker, is neither as favorable as its proponents contend, nor as unfavorable as its opponents profess. The good news is the evil-driven terrorists have not attacked us again. And I am confident that many moderate Muslims do not embrace the useless killing and destruction of property that has occurred in Iraq, but their silent vocal opposition has been disappointing, at best. The Iraqi Government has been disappointing as well, and we need to insist upon more compliance it seems to me.

But given all the facts surrounding this matter, Mr. Speaker, I believe this Chamber is well-advised to wait until September. We're told that the general will be here in September to report what, if any, favorable or unfavorable results have occurred since the surge, and I believe that is our best policy today.

The cost has been enormous, as has been said, and we would be remiss if we tried to deny that. But I think the right vote is against this proposal today, and then let's revisit it subsequently when the general comes before us in September.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 2½ minutes to the distinguished member of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Ambassador DIANE WATSON of California.

Ms. WATSON. Thank you very much, Chairman LANTOS. And thank you, Chairman SKELTON, for crafting this resolution and giving us the opportunity to discuss the war. And I want to thank our Speaker, NANCY PELOSI, who has been steadfast in moving this Congress and this country towards an honorable exit from our occupation of Iraq.

We are now 6 months into President Bush's vaunted escalation of the war in Iraq, and we are not seeing progress. Recently, the Washington Post reported that U.S. military commanders are increasingly relying on Sunni militias to fight insurgent groups. Our military officers are giving these militias weapons and intelligence and setting them loose.

Mr. Speaker, just a few months ago, the President told us he needed to escalate the commitment of the United States soldiers to Iraq to disarm ethnic militia. Now, we are arming them? Just a few months ago, the President told us that ethnic militias were undermining the security and stability of Iraq. Now, they are the guarantors of the stability and security of Iraq?

When the President's strategy for victory involves arming the people who, just a few months ago, were our sworn enemies, it becomes difficult for any of us to explain to our constituents what our troops are still doing there in Iraq.

The troops have done their job, and in an honorable way, but they will not be successful if the President cannot decide what the mission really is. And I remember him several years ago saying ''mission accomplished.'' I am sure we will hear from a number of people here that we need to give the escalation more time, that we need to wait until September. I'm not willing to do that, Mr. Speaker. I'm not willing to explain to the families of the soldiers who will die between now and September that it took an extra 3 months to figure out the President's plan, and there has been no strategy given to us for success.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, at this point, I'm pleased to yield 3 minutes to a member of our Foreign Affairs Committee, the gentleman from Texas, Judge POE.

Mr. POE. I want to thank the gentlelady for yielding time on this important issue.

Redeployment. Withdrawal. These words mean the same thing, ''we quit.'' ''Quitting'' Iraq is not a plan. It's not even a strategy; it is a total handoff of responsibility to an unstable government with an ill-prepared military.

I don't dispute that we must do more to ready Iraqis to handle their own security. I do insist, however, that we cannot suddenly leave the Iraqis scrambling to defend their new brand of democracy amidst chaos. That is what this ''leave at any cost'' plan would do: leave our enemies and those of the Iraqi people unfettered and free to pursue their diabolical agenda in Iraq and throughout the world.

So I would like to ask those who want to quit exactly what they plan to do to fight the terrorist operatives in Iraq when our troops turn around and leave. What is the plan?

I would also like to know, who, besides the ''New York Times'', is saying that the fight is lost in Iraq? Reports indicate that our troops are making progress. Sectarian murders in Baghdad have declined in the last 6 months. More Iraqis are coming to American troops with information about the terrorists. And Iraqi citizens are organizing against al Qaeda at the local level. Good for them.

Mr. Speaker, General Patton sailed with his soldiers from Algiers to Italy in World War II, and he said to them, ''No man is beaten until he thinks he is.'' This war is not over unless we quit. And when we quit, we are certainly defeated.

Here is what the defeatists say about the battle. They say that our troops were ill-prepared to go into battle, and there weren't enough of them; that they had inferior equipment; that they had improper uniforms for the extreme weather; U.S. intelligence was flawed; that we underestimated the resolve of the enemy; that Americans and our allies were killed by friendly fire. No, Mr. Speaker, this is not the war in Iraq, but this is the Battle of the Bulge in World War II, a battle that my father fought in. Those Americans, led by General Patton and others, did not run or quit because war is hard. You do not win wars by evacuating. And Americans won the Battle of the Bulge and broke the will of the enemy.

I ask this question: How does this plan to force the United States to withdraw from Iraq differ from al Qaeda's plan to force us to withdraw from Iraq? Why wouldn't al Qaeda celebrate if this bill is passed?

Mr. Speaker, General Patton went on to say to his troops, ''The glory of American arms, the honor of our country, the future of the whole world rests in our individual hands. See to it that you are worthy of this great trust.''

I do believe, Mr. Speaker, that the honor of our country is at stake again today, but that's not all. Our security, the security of Iraqis, and the future of democracy and liberty in the Middle East, all of these are in our hands.

Let us be worthy of this trust. And that's the way it is.

□ 1300

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 2 minutes to the distinguished Member from the State of Washington (Mr. SMITH) of the Foreign Affairs Committee.

Mr. SMITH of Washington. Mr. Speaker, in listening to this debate, I think the biggest problem is the proponents of the stay-the-course plan in Iraq continually and completely equate the battle in Iraq with the battle against al Qaeda and the terrorists who struck us. The two are not the same. In fact, we heard from Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN that Iraq is but one of the battlefields that we are fighting against al Qaeda. That is absolutely true. Yet we have 80 percent of our assets in Iraq. Meanwhile, report after report come out that al Qaeda is strengthening themselves in Afghanistan and Pakistan, where we don't have enough resources.

Our argument is not for retreat. Our argument is that there is a better way to fight al Qaeda and those who threaten us than to put all of our assets in Iraq while not paying enough attention to where al Qaeda is really strengthening itself. In Iraq, it is primarily a power struggle in which al Qaeda is a player. It is not primarily about al Qaeda's threat against the U.S. In Afghanistan, with the Taliban and al Qaeda, it is a very different story.

Our troops, our assets, the lives and the talents of the people of this country are tied down in Iraq fighting what is primarily a civil war instead of better fighting al Qaeda. In fact, our presence, in many ways, has strengthened al Qaeda. Syria would never be an ally of al Qaeda in any sort of real-world scenario, because al Qaeda wants to topple their regime. Yet to defeat us in Iraq, they have come up with an alliance of convenience.

There is a better way to fight al Qaeda. We are here today to change course in Iraq because it is a better way to protect this country. Timing isn't the issue. Six months ago, these facts were basically the same as they are today. In September, these facts will be basically the same as they are today. We cannot wait if we are going to have the best possible strategy for defeating al Qaeda, the group that threatens us most, instead of getting bogged down in the civil war and in the tribal differences that are present in Iraq. We want to win, not to quit. This is the better way to do it.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 6 minutes to the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. PENCE), the distinguished ranking member of the Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia.

(Mr. PENCE asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PENCE. I thank the distinguished gentlewoman and my good friend from Florida for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, we are come to this floor today, it seems to me, in an important moment in the life of two nations. We are come to this floor at a time when our colleagues in the other body are debating a Defense authorization bill and will be considering amendments about a new course in Iraq.

So I do not question the decision of the majority in this chamber to consider these same issues, particularly in light of the release of the initial benchmark assessment report by our military and diplomatic leadership in Iraq. It is a report, I must confess, Mr. Speaker, that is to me frustrating, as it is, I think, to Members on both sides of this aisle. Of 18 benchmarks included in the interim report to Congress, progress on eight of the benchmarks has been characterized as satisfactory, but progress on another eight are unsatisfactory, with it being too early to tell on another two.

Two months from now, the Crocker-Petraeus report that Congress has been promised will provide, we believe, a broader assessment. But, frankly, I am struggling, as a strong supporter of our effort in Iraq, with the failure of this Iraqi Government to step forward with progress toward enacting legislation on de-Ba'athification reform, hydrocarbon resources reform, and the scheduling of and planning of provincial elections.

Mr. Speaker, I want to be transparent about that frustration as much as I was when I met with Iraqi cabinet officials just a short 2 months ago. The Iraqi Government must do more. If there is any unintended benefit of this debate today, my hope is that some of this debate with that message would echo to those people.

But that being said, I will oppose this measure, Mr. Speaker, because I truly believe that defeat and an American failure in Iraq is not an option that we can consider.

With great respect to my colleagues who would endorse this proposal for a precipitous American withdrawal from Iraq by April 1 of next year, I truly believe that, before we make any decision adjusting our strategy on the ground, we ought to wait to hear from those Americans on the ground in Iraq who have been charged with implementing the strategy the President put into effect in January.

I want to reiterate, and I think I speak for many Republicans, Mr. Speaker, as the President said in January, our commitment to this Iraqi Government is not open-ended. But my commitment to an American and Iraqi success is deep and heartfelt. Whether this Iraqi Government can rise to that challenge or not, as the gentleman from Indiana in the other body said, we must find a way to forge agreement to achieve success in Iraq.

The good news of the assessment that has come before the Congress is that we have been achieving some progress as a result of the President's surge strategy on the ground. Between May and June, 26 high-level al Qaeda leaders have been killed or captured.

I know there are some, even the gentleman who just spoke, who questioned whether we are fighting al Qaeda in Iraq. Our soldiers don't question that. Eleven of those al Qaeda leaders killed or captured were emirs, local al Qaeda leaders; seven were facilitators who smuggled foreign weapons; and five were cell leaders who commanded terrorist units.

U.S. operations in the last 2 months, according to the reports released this week, have also uncovered an al Qaeda media network in a nondescript facility outside Samarra. U.S. forces also, I am happy to report, received 23,000 tips during this period of time, which is four to five times the number of tips we were receiving last year.

But, again, that goes against the backdrop of disappointing news. While the American soldier performs with courage and effectiveness, the Iraqi government still fails to demonstrate the urgency.

So as I struggle, I would just ask my colleagues on the other side of the aisle who share my concerns about the lack of progress in Iraq, as to this solution you bring to the floor, how will your plan for a unilateral withdrawal keep American soldiers safe?

We have 160,000 soldiers there now. The majority of this Congress would call for them to exit Iraq by April 1. Well, in effect it would take 3,000 large convoys, according to some press reports, to evacuate the country down the one road out through Basra and into Kuwait.

Also I would ask, how would this plan for unilateral withdrawal decrease the number of terrorist safe havens in that country? And since al Qaeda is clearly in Iraq, how would the plan for unilateral withdrawal succeed in fighting al Qaeda in Iraq?

Lastly, I say as the ranking member of the Middle East Subcommittee, how will a withdrawal, a precipitous, reckless, irresponsible withdrawal, make the Middle East safer and more stable?

I fear if we lose Iraq, we will lose Israel. We must come together as a Nation to find a way forward to succeed in Iraq.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from New York (Mr. ENGEL), a valued member of the Foreign Affairs Committee.

Mr. ENGEL. I thank the gentleman, my distinguished friend, the chairman, for yielding time to me.

Mr. Speaker, it's time to get our troops out of the middle of an Iraqi civil war. It's time to start bringing our troops home.

My friends on the other side of the aisle are essentially saying ''stay the course.'' At what point, I would ask my friends, do we say that the administration's policies in Iraq have failed and it is time to change course? I think that time is now.

Even the Bush administration's interim assessment of whether the Iraqis are meeting basic benchmarks shows that they have failed to achieve any level of political and economic success. Here we are in the fifth year of the war, longer than World War II, more than half a trillion dollars and 3,600 American lives lost, and Iraqi politicians seem further apart than ever. Indeed, the evidence that our soldiers are involved in an Iraqi civil war is mounting and a solution seems even further from our grasp.

Young American service personnel cannot solve the problem of Iraq, because, ultimately, Iraq is not a military problem anymore; it is a political crisis. And if the Iraqis cannot solve their political problems, we cannot do it for them. Only Iraqi politicians can bring about a solution, and our military personnel should not be dying to hold together the collapsed Iraqi state.

Mr. Speaker, this war has turned into a great strategic fiasco, from the lack of planning to insufficient number of troops, to incompetent management of reconstruction projects, to the use of torture in military prisons. Our blunder in Iraq will affect our ability to succeed in the Middle East and elsewhere for years to come.

Therefore, I strongly support this bill, which requires that we begin redeploying American troops home within 120 days of enactment and ending by April 1, 2008.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON), the distinguished ranking member of the Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere of our Foreign Affairs Committee.

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. I thank the gentlewoman for yielding.

You know, the things that are being said today, if George Washington had had television and radio and newspapers, would have been said about him. Several of his generals wanted him out because he wasn't winning battles and things were going wrong. Even in the Congress of the United States, Lee of Virginia led the charge to try to get rid of George Washington during the Revolutionary War.

Abraham Lincoln, McClellan, one of his chief generals, who wouldn't fight, ran against him for President, and Lincoln was going to be defeated if Sherman hadn't taken Atlanta.

War is not a popular thing. It's a horrible thing. Chairman LANTOS was a survivor of the camps during the Holocaust during World War II. I would like to ask you a question: What would have happened if we hadn't won that war? How many more Jewish people would have been killed in those camps? Millions more. Six million died, but many millions more probably would have died if Hitler had prevailed. But we had Winston Churchill, who was willing to go to the mat to make sure that they didn't win and that he was going to defeat Hitler.

If we pull out unilaterally like they're talking about right now, we leave those people over there who voted and held their fingers up, we leave those people to their fate with these people who are radicals, who are going to take over.

Iran has camps. Senator LIEBERMAN talked about that. They have training camps right there along the border. They are sending terrorists in to help augment the terrorists in Iraq. And if we unilaterally pull out, just like you're talking about, those people who voted for freedom and democracy, many, many, many of those will die, maybe even more than who have been dying in Darfur, and you have been talking about how important it is that we do something in Darfur.

□ 1315

A vacuum will be created, and Iran will fill it. They will not stop their nuclear development program, and we will be imperiled down the road from their nuclear development program because they'll have a real jumping-off point throughout the Middle East, not just in Iran but in Iraq and possibly Afghanistan, if many of you have your way.

I don't know why we're not waiting on General Petraeus' report. We just gave him authority and gave him the money to pursue this until he reports back in September. I don't understand why we're jumping the gun and trying to force withdrawal right now when General Petraeus, who talked to all of us, has not had a chance to succeed.

Mr. Speaker, 61 million people died in World War II, 6 million Jews; 61 million. In this nuclear age, if we pull in our horns and let Iran run wild over there, which they will, and they develop their nuclear program, how many millions could die in this country as well as around the world? I submit it probably would be more than 61 million.

In the United States, if we pull out like you're talking about, we'll probably have to go back in to stop them from developing that nuclear capability and stop them from training these people to go in and terrorize not only Iran and also Iraq and other places in the Middle East. That is a tinderbox over there and we have to make the right decision.

Every President who has been in a war has been criticized by Congress at one time or another. Every single President, unless it was a very short war where you were in for 5 or 6 days or a couple of months. This is no exception.

Have mistakes been made? You bet. Were mistakes made in World War II? Eight hundred guys drowned in a mock Normandy invasion off the coast of England. If we had television then and the newspapers we have today, we would never have invaded Normandy because they would have stopped it just like that because of criticism of those 800 guys drowning to death. They would have said it wouldn't have worked; it wasn't feasible.

This is a very, very important issue we are talking about. Our brave soldiers are doing their job over there. And they watch on television right now, and what are they hearing? Pull out, pull out, pull out. They are asking, What are we fighting for if the Congress is going to jerk us out right now? We have heard from a lot of them who say, hey, we're doing the job, and we're doing better right now.

I just think we ought to think very long and hard about what we're doing. It could effect a world war. We're in a world war against al Qaeda right now, but it could be a much more devastating war if we don't make the right decisions. I would like to say to my colleagues that I think it's extremely important that you think long and hard about what you're trying to do. Nobody likes war. Nobody likes war.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 2 minutes to our distinguished colleague from Texas, a member of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Mr. GREEN.

Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee for allowing me to speak.

Before I get into my prepared remarks, part of the resolution, if my colleagues would go to page 5 of the resolution, says as part of the justification required, the President shall, at a minimum, address whether it is necessary for the Armed Forces to carry out the following missions: protecting U.S. diplomatic facilities and U.S. citizens, including Armed Forces who are engaged in carrying out other missions; serving in roles consistent with customary diplomatic positions; but also, engaging in actions to disrupt and eliminate al Qaeda and its affiliated organizations in Iraq.

So while I sat here on the floor listened and heard, ''we are bailing out of attacking al Qaeda,'' we are not doing that. This resolution says we will still be there. The President has to certify, though, that is what we are doing. We are not shoring up the Iraqi Government; we are fighting al Qaeda, who brought us September 11. So anybody who says we are leaving is just wrong.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this resolution and this legislation, and thank Chairman SKELTON for his work on the bill. Like Chairman SKELTON, I want to thank our soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines and their families who are serving our country.

I have stated before, we must let the Iraqi Government know our commitment is not open-ended. I have not supported efforts for immediate withdrawal, but this bill, just like our first supplemental sent to the President, which he vetoed, lets the Iraqi Government know that they need to make some tough choices to stabilize their country within the next several months.

It also gives our administration time to have a comprehensive strategy in Iraq, and allows the troops to remain to protect our diplomatic facilities and fight al Qaeda, and training and equipping the Iraqi security forces.

As this legislation states, we give the President the authority to use the Armed Forces to defend the national security of the United States against the continuing threat posed by the Iraqi government at that time. But we won that battle. The government was removed. The power and its leader indicted, tried and convicted, and executed by the newly elected, now-democratic government of Iraq.

This bill will bring our troops home by April 1 of next year—that will be more than 5 years since the war began. U.S. taxpayers have spent billions of dollars, and thousands of troops have given their lives to bring security and stability to Iraq.

While the current Iraqi government has been organizing and security forces have been training, our forces have been responsible for every facet of security in Iraq. Our troops defeated Saddam's Army, worked to control the country, policed Iraq's streets, protected the transitional and elected governments, and trained Iraq security forces.

Our military has given the Iraqi government, the Iraqi security forces, and the Iraqi people every opportunity to have a stable, democratic country. It is time to let the Iraqi people know that 5 years is long enough—they must take responsibility for the future of their country.

I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this bill to bring our troops home in a safe, responsible timeframe.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, before I yield to the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. INGLIS) who has traveled to Iraq several times, I yield myself a minute to answer some questions posed on the other side of the aisle.

What we have here is a nonspecific, nondetailed, nothing planned for victory. The bill on page 3, since the gentleman refers to the bill, let's look at it. It talks about a reduction, a transition, a limited presence, a limited presence, again, with maximum attention paid to the protection of our Armed Forces. What does that mean? So you want our troops to face the terrorists with even less protection?

It shall be further implemented as part of a comprehensive strategy. What do these phrases mean? What would General Petraeus do if this legislation were to become law, which it will not? This is not a plan. It says nothing. It is making a political statement.

I am pleased to yield 3½ minutes to the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. INGLIS) who has been to Iraq and understands the situation well.

Mr. INGLIS of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlelady for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, we have a huge challenge in Iraq. It is a challenge for Democrats. It is a challenge for Republicans. It is a challenge for the President and for the Congress. We need an American solution to that challenge. The question before us today is whether this resolution is going to advance that solution or it is actually going to make it more difficult.

I am one of the 17 Republicans that wasn't convinced of the surge; but I am aware now that we are doing it. It is underway, and the plan is clear to have General Petraeus report in September.

I am not certain why it is that we should be debating today a resolution prior to that time because, between now and then, rather than having a succession of political kind of resolutions, we could be working toward an American consensus on this. I would submit, Mr. Speaker, that that consensus is not that far away. I think we can start with two very clear observations. First, our military has done exactly what we have asked them to do. And they have done it very well.

Second, we need to use the American concept of accountability. We need to impose accountability on the Iraqi regime and say to them, we have these benchmarks and here are some rewards for success and some consequences for failure.

And between now and September 30, if we work in a cooperative way, I think we can find a whole series of success check points that we can lay out for the regime in Baghdad. We can say to them, Republicans, Democrats, the President and Congress alike, can say to them, here are the things that we want you to accomplish, and we have the right to insist that you accomplish them because after all, we are spending $2 billion a week. But even more important than that, far more important than that, we have American lives at risk. So we have the right as their protectors. We want you to achieve these things. If you do, you get these rewards. If you fail, these are the consequences. We can lay out a whole series of those if we work together in a cooperative way. The President, the Congress, Republicans and Democrats, we can come up with that American solution and we can find a way forward in Iraq.

The question that I think the proponents of this resolution need to answer is, if you simply set the withdrawal date of April 1, what went with all of that accountability? What went with all of those success check points? The question really for the proponents is: How do you know by April 1, such a date in stone, that you will have succeeded? Why not work cooperatively between now and September, awaiting the report, to prepare a series of very carefully thought out success check points with consequences for failure and rewards for success? And think through the plan. As it is, I think there is not much of a plan; and, therefore, I will vote against the resolution.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 2 minutes to a valued member of the Foreign Affairs Committee, my colleague from California (Ms. WOOLSEY).

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank Chairman LANTOS for the time and Chairman SKELTON for bringing this important resolution to the House floor.

Mr. Speaker, the American people have called for bold action to bring our troops home, and today we are debating a first step, setting a date certain to bring them home.

Over the next weeks, we will vote to prohibit permanent bases in Iraq. We will continue the drumbeat to fund the safe and complete withdrawal of our troops.

But, Mr. Speaker, despite calls—no, actually pleas—from the American people, some at the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue and many right here in the House are just fine with staying the course. In fact, they are once again changing the conversation. They are trying to focus on gut feelings about an upcoming terrorist attack. But the American people will not stand for changing the conversation, and they will not stand for staying the course, nor should we in this Congress.

The costs are just too high: $10 billion a month, and worst of all, the deadliest 3-month period since the escalation; 3,600 troops dead; at least 26,000 wounded; and tens of thousands of Iraqi refugees leaving Iraq every day. This is not only unacceptable; it is immoral.

Today, the Congress must take a bold step to bring our troops home. We must stand up today with the American people. We must say, enough is enough. End the occupation, bring our troops home.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. MCCAUL), a member of our Foreign Affairs Committee.

Mr. MCCAUL of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I thank the ranking member of the Foreign Affairs Committee for yielding me this time.

Here we are once again. I feel like we have done this before. Once again, I rise in opposition to the Democratic leadership's latest attempt to politicize the war, and I strongly urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to vote against defeat in Iraq.

Mr. Speaker, the debate in this Chamber over the future of Iraq and the best course of action has been passionate and divisive, and each Member of this House has their own opinion. Yet the one thing we should be united on is our end goal and result. That should be the same: a democratic and stable Iraq.

The Democratic majority has chosen to use this month of July, as they have

attempted several times already this year, to hold a series of votes to withdrawal our troops and force a premature end to Iraq's pursuit of freedom and democracy.

We have to ask: What would happen if we withdrawal immediately? When we talk to the experts in the region, the leaders in these governments and key stakeholders in the region, they will tell you it will be a fireball in the Middle East. It will create a vacuum, a safe haven for al Qaeda. Iran will swoop in and take over. They, the key nations in the region, are quite frankly terrified of this action, and they tell us that privately.

I believe that we can cannot afford that course of action. The Democrats have chosen this course not because it is in the national interest of this country but rather because they believe it provides them with good talking points to use back home. I submit they are mistaken.

In my view, Americans are tired and frustrated with the partisan squabbling over the war which has done nothing to improve the situation in Iraq. Putting politics above our national interest while the men and women of our military are fighting overseas is simply unacceptable.

□ 1330

In a time of war, politics should end at the water's edge.

There is another way forward. I and others have introduced the Iraq Study Group recommendations Implementation Act of 2007. This legislation is bipartisan. It is a comprehensive set of recommendations, a plan of action to succeed in Iraq, a plan which matches our military might with political solutions, with economic solutions and with a diplomatic surge which can bring peace and stability to the troubled nation. This bill has gained strength by those who recognize that moving forward in a unified way still exists in the Congress.

The Iraq Study Group report offers a consensus policy that the vast majority of Americans support. The sponsors of the Democrat withdrawal bill that we are debating here today, however, have decided that even though the surge only came into effect 3 weeks ago, that it's already failed and we need to question it and throw it out.

They further decided that we should declare defeat immediately and not wait for General Petraeus to come to Congress and give us his firsthand report. This rush to judgment, this rush to action on their part makes it clear that they have not reached an informed decision but, rather, a political one.

Throughout the course of our American history, we've answered the call for freedom, and we, Mr. Speaker, I submit are at our greatest when we are united as a Nation; at our worst when we are divided.

We should unite behind the ideals which helped achieve victory against the threats to our very way of life, such as the victories against the Third Reich, such as the threats by the Soviet empire and the victory against the Soviet Union.

Today, the greatest threat is the threat of terrorism, and the conflict in Iraq poses one of the greatest challenges to the American experience. We must unite, or we will surely fail.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to yield 2½ minutes to a distinguished colleague from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE), a member of the Foreign Affairs Committee.

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, let me thank the chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee for allowing members of that committee to show their commitment through their legislative work in a hearing at the early stages of his leadership when we were allowed to present solutions. They were not Republican solutions or Democratic solutions. They were solutions for those of us who love America, and I just want to simply reinforce that. I thank Mr. SKELTON for his leadership.

I have legislation that declares a military success, and I rise today to make it clear that I believe that the fallen in battle are heroes, and those who still fight carry their banner, for 3,611 have died, and I don't know why we're not on this floor declaring a military victory, thanking our soldiers.

And my good friend from Texas says that he supports the Iraq Study Group. So do I and I have legislation. We all have legislation that responds to the Iraq Study Group. I might remind him that that report, bipartisan report, speaks articulately to redeployment, and so when we look at the costs of the war, $120 billion, Americans are asking, should one more drop of blood be shed? And my answer to that is, no. Should we engage? Yes. Should we involve in the surge of diplomacy? Absolutely.

We want to make sure that all of those nation states can work to help solve the divide, the civil war. But we must face the facts that this process that the President is continuing to repeat does not work. It is wracked with corruption and misdirection. There were no weapons of mass destruction.

As a member of the Homeland Security Committee, I have been disturbed this whole week as I listened to the Secretary of Homeland Security speak about his gut feeling of the possibility of a terrorist attack. I'm a member of that committee. I live every day with the idea that the question will be asked by Americans to the Homeland Security Committee and the Homeland Security Department, does the Secretary realize that we have fueled the fires of terrorism by training terrorists in this war.

And so when I speak of why we must end, it is to save lives. It is to reconcile Iraq, and it is to make America safer. I ask for support of the underlying legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 2956, the Responsible Redeployment From Iraq Act. I rise in strong support of this legislation because I am listening, and responding to the will of the American people. Last November 2006, Americans went to polls by the millions united in their resolve to vote for change. They voted for a new direction and a change in the Bush administration's disastrous policy in Iraq. The new Democratic majority heard them and responded by passing H.R. 1591, the Iraq Accountability Act. The President vetoed the bill, demanding instead a continuation of the ancien régime under which the Republican-led Congress gave him a blank check to mismanage the occupation and reconstruction of Iraq.

Those days are over. No matter how many veto threats the President issues, this Congress is not going to give him a blank check to escalate and continue the war ad infinitum. It is long past time for change in Iraq. It is time for the people and Government of Iraq to take primary responsibility for their own country. It is time for the President to recognize the reality on the ground in Iraq. The time when a surge in troops is useful and necessary is past. It is now time to redeploy our troops and launch a diplomatic surge for national and political reconciliation in Iraq. H.R. 2956 will help achieve this goal and that is why I support the measure.

Mr. Speaker, there is no more important issue facing the Congress, the President, and the American people than the war in Iraq. It is a subject which agitates the passions of all Americans, including Members of Congress. The Framers understood that while the military does the fighting, a nation goes to war. That is why the Framers lodged the power to declare war in the Congress, the branch of Government closest to the people. They knew that the decision to go to war was too important to be left to the whim of a single person, no matter how wise or well-informed he or she might be.

Four years ago, President Bush stood under a banner that proclaimed "Mission Accomplished." If the mission was to further place our troops in harm's way at the hands of insurgents and sectarian violence, then it is mission accomplished. After spending more than $450 billion sacrificing the lives of 3,611 of America's finest citizen-soldiers, what have we accomplished and where are we headed?

I cannot support the President's waging of a war that has no clear direction, does not meet the benchmarks that the President set, and has no visible target.

Four years after launching the invasion, conquest, and occupation of Iraq, the evidence is clear and irrefutable: The preemptive invasion of Iraq, while a spectacularly executed military operation, was a strategic blunder without parallel in the history of American foreign policy. This is what can happen when the Congress allows itself to be stampeded into authorizing a president to launch a preemptive war of choice.

It is time to change our strategy in Iraq. It is time to engage the key stakeholders in the Middle East and make real strides towards securing a just and lasting peace in Iraq and for the Iraqi people. And most important, bring our troops home so they can be reunited with their families, friends, and neighbors.

That is why, Mr. Speaker, I support H.R. 2956. The Responsible Redeployment From Iraq Act requires a responsible redeployment of U.S. troops beginning within 120 days of enactment and ending by April 1, 2008. The legislation requires the President to publicly justify the post-redeployment missions for the U.S. military in Iraq and the minimum number of troops necessary to carry out those missions.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation is consistent with the advice of military and foreign policy experts, ensures the safety of our men and women in uniform, addresses our commitment to fighting terrorism, and reflects the will of the American people.

Mr. Speaker, the need for a new direction in Iraq could not be clearer. In the face of mounting evidence that progress is not being made in Iraq, military leaders, defense experts, Republican and Democratic Members of Congress, and the American people are demanding change. Yet the President continues to urge continued support for a failed policy that is not making America safer or supporting our troops.

In a report released today by the White House, the administration concedes that violence continues in Iraq and that the Iraqi Government has failed to meet key benchmarks endorsed by the President in January and political reconciliation is nonexistent. By the Bush administration's own admission, there is unsatisfactory progress on all of the political reconciliation benchmarks announced by the President on January 10, 2007.

In fact, just this week, the National Security Network reported that since the President announced his ''surge'' policy 6 months ago, more than 25,000 troops have been sent to Iraq, approximately 600 have been killed and more than 3,000 have been wounded.

Mr. Speaker, President Bush and Vice President CHENEY have been given numerous chances and ample time by the American people and the Congress to straighten out the mess in Iraq. They have failed. It is little wonder that the criticism of the administration's failed policy in Iraq is mounting by the day. Respected military leaders, like LTG William Odom, have spoken forcefully. According to Lieutenant General Odom, ''No effective new strategy can be devised for the United States until it begins withdrawing its forces from Iraq. Only that step will break the paralysis that now confronts us.''

Key Republican Senators are joining the chorus of critics. In addition to Foreign Relations Committee Ranking Member Senator RICHARD LUGAR, some of the President's allies in Congress have spoken out. Senator PETE DOMENICI says, ''There's no reason to wait . . . [I am] trying to tell [Bush] that he must change his ways because there is nothing positive happening.'' Senator ELIZABETH DOLE says, ''It is my firm hope and belief that we can start bringing our troops home in 2008.'' Senator LAMAR ALEXANDER says, ''The President needs a new strategy.''

And just this week, in a USA Today/Gallup Poll, more than 70 percent of Americans favor removal of almost all U.S. troops from Iraq by April 2008, leaving a limited number for counterterrorism efforts.

MILITARY SUCCESS IN IRAQ ACT

Finally Mr. Speaker, I support this legislation because it is grounded in the fundamental principles I first announced in February of this year when I introduced H.R. 930, the Military Success in Iraq and Diplomatic Surge for National and Political Reconciliation in Iraq Act of 2007. I introduced this legislation, the Military Success in Iraq Act of 2007, MSIA or ''Messiah,'' to offer an honorable deliverance from Iraq. Let me explain.

In October 2002, the Congress authorized the President to use military force against Iraq to achieve the following objectives:

(1) To disarm Iraq of any weapons of mass destruction that could threaten the security of the United States and international peace in the Persian Gulf region;

(2) To change the Iraqi regime so that Saddam Hussein and his Baathist party no longer posed a threat to the people of Iraq or its neighbors;

(3) To bring to justice any members of al Qaeda known or found to be in Iraq bearing responsibility for the attacks on the United States, its citizens, and interests, including the attacks that occurred on September 11,2001;

(4) To ensure that the regime of Saddam Hussein would not provide weapons of mass destruction to international terrorists, including al Qaeda; and

(5) To enforce all relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions regarding Iraq.

Every one of these objectives has long been accomplished. Iraq does not possess weapons of mass destruction. Saddam Hussein has been deposed, captured, and dealt with by the Iraqi people. The American military has caught or killed virtually every member of al Qaeda in Iraq that was even remotely responsible for the 9–11 attack on our country. Last, all relevant U.N. resolutions relating to Iraq have been enforced. In other words, every objective for which the use of force in Iraq was authorized by the 2002 resolution has been achieved.

Mr. Speaker, since the objectives which led Congress to pass the 2002 Authorization to Use Military Force (AUMF) have been achieved, I believe the authorization to use that military force expires automatically. My legislation affirms this proposition. Additionally, I believe, and my legislation provides, that it is the Congress that is the ultimate arbiter as to whether the objectives set forth in a congressional AUMF have been achieved.

Mr. Speaker, where a Congressional authorization to use military force has expired, the President must obtain a new authorization to continue the use force. My legislation requires the President to do that as well. Finally, my bill requires that if the Congress does not vote to reauthorize the use of force in Iraq within 90 days after determining that the objectives set forth in the 2002 AUMF have been achieved, all American armed forces in Iraq must be redeployed out of Iraq. Thus, under my legislation, an up-or-down vote must be held by the House and Senate to continue waging war in Iraq.

I am not talking about ''cutting and running,'' or surrendering to terrorists. And I certainly am not talking about staying in Iraq forever or the foreseeable future. The Armed Forces won the war they were sent to fight. Their civilian leadership has not succeeded in winning the peace. That is why the United States should surge diplomatically and politically.

Title II of my legislation, the ''Diplomatic Surge for Political and National Reconciliation in Iraq Act,'' implements twelve of the most important recommendations of the Iraq Study Group. This approach is now gaining widespread support among many who had previously disparaged diplomacy in favor of military force.

All six of Iraq's neighbors—Iran, Turkey, Syria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait—have an interest in a stabilized Iraq because as the Iraq Study Group report makes clear, none of these countries wants to live with an Iraq that, after our redeployment, becomes a failed state or a humanitarian catastrophe that could become a haven for terrorists or hemorrhages millions more refugees who will stream into neighboring countries.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to the enormous financial cost, the human cost to the men and women of the United States Armed Forces has also been high but they have willingly paid it. Operation Iraqi Freedom has exacerbated the Veterans Administration health care facility maintenance backlog; placed an undue strain on the delivery of medical treatment and rehabilitative services for current and new veterans; and exacted a heavy toll on the equipment, training and readiness requirements, and the families of the men and women of the United States Armed Forces.

Mr. Speaker, everyday when I walk into my office I am reminded of the courageous young men and women who have given their lives in service to our nation. Outside my office I have displayed a poster-board that displays the names and faces of those who made the ultimate sacrifice. The poster-board is nearly full. I do not want to start another board. Let me call the roll of honor of the remarkable sons and daughters of Houston, Texas who have made the ultimate sacrifice and gave the last full measure of devotion: Capt. Eric L. Allton, Petty Officer 1st Class Howard E. Babcock IV, Spec. Adolfo C. Carballo, Staff Sgt. Brian T. Craig, Staff Sgt. Terrence D. Dunn, Pfc. Analaura Esparza Gutierrez, 1st Lt. David M. Fraser, Lance Cpl. Phillip C. George, Spec. Clinton R. Gertson, Capt. Andrew R. Houghton, Master Sgt. Ivica Jerak, Spec. John P. Johnson, Pfc. Roy L. Jones III, Cpl. Brian M. Kennedy, Staff Sgt. Dexter S. Kimble,

Spec. Scott Q. Larson Jr., Staff Sgt. Hector Leija, Pfc. Jesus A. Leon-Perez, Sgt. Keelan L. Moss, Tech. Sgt. Walter M. Moss Jr., Staff Sgt. Kenneth I. Pugh, Staff Sgt. William D. Richardson, Staff Sgt. Timothy J. Roark, Sgt. Michael T. Robertson, Cpl. Benjamin S. Rosales, Staff Sgt. Alberto V. Sanchez, Pfc. Leroy Sandoval Jr., Pfc. Armando Soriano, Cpl. Tomas Sotelo Jr., Sgt. Danny R. Soto, Spec. Juan M. Torres, Lance Cpl. Thomas J. Zapp.

Mr. Speaker, the misguided, mismanaged, and costly debacle that is the Iraq War which was preemptively launched by President Bush in March 2003 despite the opposition of me and 125 of my colleagues in the House of Representatives has lasted longer than America's involvement in World War II, the greatest conflict in all of human history.

But there is a difference. The Second World War ended in complete and total victory for the United States and its allies. But then again, in that conflict America was led by FDR, a great Commander-in-Chief, who had a plan to win the war and secure the peace, listened to his generals, and sent troops in sufficient numbers and sufficiently trained and equipped to do the job.

My friends, I say with sadness that we have not enjoyed that same quality of leadership

throughout the conduct of the Iraq War. The results, not surprisingly, have been disastrous. To date, the war in Iraq has claimed the lives of 3,611 brave servicemen and women. The last three months of the war have been among the deadliest (104 in April, 123 in May, 101 in June, and 32 in the first week of July). More than 26,690 Americans have been wounded, many suffering the most horrific injuries. American taxpayers have paid nearly $450 billion to sustain this misadventure. To grasp the magnitude of this number, consider that American taxpayers are spending: $120,000,000,000 per year; $10,000,000,000 per month; $2,307,692,380 per week; $329,670,330 per day; $13,736,264 per hour; $228,938 per minute; $3,816 per second.

Mr. Speaker, last November the American people signaled clearly their loss of confidence in the President's leadership and their desire for a new direction in Iraq. The new Democratic majority has begun to deliver. And we will not rest, Mr. Speaker, until we are clearly on a glide path to the day when our troops come home.

And even then our work will not be done. We must still be about the business of repairing the damage to America's international reputation and prestige. But this Democratic majority, led by the Progressive Caucus and the Out of Iraq Caucus, has ushered in a new era of oversight, accountability, and transparency to defense and reconstruction contracting and procurement.

I urge all members to join me in supporting H.R. 2956. This is the best way to ensure accountability to our soldiers who have been sent into battle without proper training or equipment or a clear mission. It is the best way to keep faith with our veterans who are not getting the best medical care when they come home. Passing this legislation is essential to restoring our military that is being stretched to the limits by the Bush policy. Last, it is absolutely necessary to regain the confidence of the American people who demand a new direction in Iraq.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself as much time as I may consume because I'd like to comment on a point that was raised by my good friend from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) regarding the intentions of Iran.

The deputy interior minister for security affairs and the former deputy head of the Revolutionary Guards in Iran said on April 26 of this year, ''Iran has long-range missiles that can make nowhere safe for America.''

He also said, ''Iran is able to fire tens of thousands of missiles per day at American targets on a daily basis and, with its long-range missiles, can threaten Israel which is acting as America's'' proxy.

So it is clear to us, Mr. Speaker, that Iran seeks not just to wipe Israel off the map, as Ahmadinejad has said time and again, but to destroy the United States. So is the plan to immediately leave Iraq so that Iran can begin its takeover of the region? Is this in the national security interests of the United States? Is that going to make us safer?

I think that we should carefully consider what will happen were we to withdraw immediately as, it has been called for.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of our time.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to yield 2 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Texas (Mr. HINOJOSA), a member of the Foreign Affairs Committee.

Mr. HINOJOSA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of the Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act, H.R. 2956, and for the safe redeployment of our combat troops out of Iraq.

I thank our Chairman LANTOS of the Foreign Affairs Committee for yielding time to me and want to reiterate that for 4 years now our administration has sacrificed its many soldiers for an Iraqi Government that has failed to take responsibility for its own security. While many of these soldiers have made great sacrifices on our Nation's behalf, the President has failed to support them with a viable strategy to succeed in Iraq and then to end combat operations.

This bill would force the President to be accountable to this Congress and to the American people. Yes, the American people deserve to know how this war is conducted and how it will end.

This bill would force the Iraqi Government to realize that America's commitment to their nation is not open-ended and that they must be accountable to their people for security and stability.

This bill would allow our military to safely redeploy from combat in Iraq to better confront emerging security threats around the world.

This bill would end the drain upon our Nation's resources that could better be used on our priorities at home such as improving our homeland security, strengthening our economy, and for providing for our citizens.

I strongly support this important legislation and request the President heed the call of this Congress to support our troops by redeploying them out of Iraq.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from New Mexico (Mr. PEARCE).

Mr. PEARCE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for her yielding and for her work on the issue and thank the majority party for their work. We're involved in a very serious discussion here.

I was in the Air Force in 1970, in Reese Air Force Base in Texas in pilot training, and the Shah of Iran's son was in the class right behind me. I didn't know much about the Shah of Iran, coming from Hobbs, New Mexico, but we began to watch and began to visualize as he left training, and those Iranians who were in the training class with me left and went back home to Iran, what their life was like flying jets in the Middle East. And then in 1979, the Shah was suddenly out of power, just like that. The ayatollah came to power and instituted a tremendous repressive regime that continues to this day.

Now, the question that our friends on the other side of the aisle fail to ask is what is their plan to see that our friends in the Middle East have stability because, in fact, they're balancing the terrorists in their own countries every day. They're balancing them using our force and our will and our promise to help.

So what do our friends in Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Kuwait, Qatar, UAE, what do they do? When I went to Israel earlier this year, Israel simply said they fall. If you leave Iraq, those nations fall.

Now, it's an uncomfortable truth, but somehow we're not going to talk about some uncomfortable truth these days. It's an uncomfortable truth that the entire Middle East is facing a problem of stability. If the entire Middle East faces a problem with stability, the entire world has a problem of stability because, if the Middle East exports about 25 to 30 percent of the world's oil, which it does, then the world oil market becomes destabilized, the world economy becomes destabilized, and in the end, the terrorists win because they have destabilized the world rather than defeat any of the forces in the world. That's been their long-term plan, to export instability, and they have been doing a very good job of it.

Now, the President after 9/11 said we're going to fight a war on terror that simply does three things: we're going to take away the training camps, we're going to choke off their funding, and we're going to take the fight to them. Now, you can agree or disagree that Iraq is a place of combat with the terrorists, but it looks like to me that the terrorists from all over the world are coming in there. Iran is providing terrorists and weapons, Syria, other nations; and so whether or not it appears that the war is there, our soldiers believe that they're actually fighting al Qaeda.

So the President's plan has definitely uprooted the training camps. We've begun to squeeze off the funding to the al Qaeda troops, to the terrorists worldwide, and we have taken the fight to them. But now then, when we retreat, when we come home, the question that has failed to be asked by our friends who have this resolution calling our troops home, it fails to ask what do we do for world stability at that point. It is a serious omission. It's not accidental.

I appreciate the gentlelady for yielding.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to yield 2 minutes to a valued member of the Foreign Affairs Committee who serves with great distinction as vice chair of the Subcommittee on Terrorism, Non-Proliferation and Trade, Mr. DAVID SCOTT of Georgia.

Mr. SCOTT of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I stand 100 percent behind this bill for a responsible redeployment of our troops out of Iraq. Much has been said. There are several points I would like to make going forward.

First of all, this is responsible. This is not something that was just put together. This was put together with military advisers of the first order, generals on the ground who were consulted, and by two of the most distinguished individuals in this Chamber, our distinguished chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Mr. TOM LANTOS, and our distinguished chairman of our Armed Services Committee, Mr. IKE SKELTON. Nobody can argue their credentials. Nobody can argue the credentials of the military advisers that put this together.

But most importantly, the people that no one has mentioned, the entity that no one has mentioned, the most important entity of all is the American people. This bill represents the will of the American people. Seventy percent of the American people support this action today.

Now, let me remind you of the words of Robert Jackson, one of our distinguished Supreme Court Justices in the steel seizure case of 1952, when a similar situation was in place, where we were at loggerheads then with the executive branch and the legislative branch, but at that point, the Supreme Court decided that Congress has the authority. And Jackson went on to say that when the executive branch denies, disrespects and disavows the authority of Congress, we enter into what is referred to as a zone of twilight, or a twilight zone.

□ 1345

That's where we are now, to get out of this twilight zone of destruction and mayhem, of instability in the Middle East. You talk about stability in the Middle East. We are more unstable in the Middle East now as a result of what we have done.

Get us out of this twilight zone. This bill is the way to do it, and I commend it and hope we pass it overwhelmingly.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Generals on the ground were consulted on this bill? Seventy percent of Americans support this bill, support immediate withdrawal of our troops?

This bill before us is nothing more than political hyperbole, partisan politics using our troops as cover, because the American people don't have this bill in front of them. We didn't have this bill before us until just a few hours ago.

Let me show you exactly what the Democratic leadership has scheduled for us to debate, and I use the term lightly. For an entire day, rather than do the hard work of our Congress that we need to do to have more serious discussions on Iraq, on this bill, on appropriations, it's six pages long, six pages long.

It was introduced yesterday, so I don't know what commanders on the field we consulted with. I would be interested in doing that, in finding that out. The first page is the title. The second page, it's a ''sense of Congress,'' language, nonbinding. The third page says ''reduce forces to limited presence.'' Who understands what that is? Certainly not the drafters of this bill. The fourth and the fifth page calls for a strategy.

Yet this Congress already has demanded a strategy from the President, and it is due in September, a report. That's what the Democrats say they have asked for. But yet they are not willing to wait for that report.

The last page is definitions. This is what we are debating today, Democratic politics using our troops as pawns. Commanders on the field who were consulted? Give me a break.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of our time.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1½ minutes to a valued member of the Foreign Affairs Committee, my friend and colleague from California (Mr. COSTA).

Mr. COSTA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to support H.R. 2956, the Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act.

Now, certainly this measure is part of an ongoing effort to try to bring comprehensive change. We do have a vested interest in the Middle East as we are engaged in this war on terror throughout the world.

Notwithstanding that fact, though, for 6 years, our administration has had a blank check in Iraq, and that war on terror, and unfortunately, I think, by any critical evaluation, at best it has been bungled. At worst, we have made a mess of things. The previous Congresses have left little to be desired in terms of real oversight.

With unlimited resources, we have complicated our relations with the Middle East, and it's unfortunate for our country. It seems for every step forward, we take a step back. This legislation, then again, is another effort to begin a new direction, which will protect our interests in the Middle East and begin to develop a plan to bring our troops home.

What is lacking in this legislation though is a requirement for the President to tell us how we are going to, in fact, stabilize the areas with all the diplomatic resources available to us and our allies throughout the world in this region. Nonetheless, under the current circumstances, this legislation, I believe, is the next logical step. Clearly, doing more of the same continues to risk precious lives of American men and women in uniform, not to mention our Treasury, with little responsiveness, unfortunately and cooperation from the Iraqi Government.

Hopefully, this legislation will allow the administration to engage and work with us for constructive change that the American people demands.

I ask for an ''aye'' vote.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, first of all I would like to thank you for keeping such careful order on the floor on such a controversial topic.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair thanks the gentlewoman.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. I have the pleasure of yielding 3 minutes to the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. SHAYS) who has been to Iraq several times, has wrestled with his conscience and understands the situation of jihadist terrorism worldwide.

Mr. SHAYS. I thank the gentlelady for yielding.

I deeply admire TOM LANTOS, my friend, whom I have known for so many years, and IKE SKELTON, the authors of this resolution.

Mr. Speaker, this is a debate about an issue we all have strong feelings about. I regret to say it's a debate that's under a closed rule that doesn't allow all aspects of this issue to come to the forefront, and I deeply regret that.

We asked for a new Secretary of Defense. We wanted Rumsfeld replaced, and he was replaced by Secretary Gates. We asked for a new general on the ground and a new strategy, and General Petraeus was chosen.

After all that he had already done, he was willing to step in. He received unanimous support in the Senate, unanimous support. He has asked one thing from us with this new strategy. He said, give me until September 15 to show what we can do with this surge.

What this resolution does is it bypasses that. It basically, in my judgment, pulls the rug out from under General Petraeus. I think we owe it to him, unless he were to come back and say, we need to change our strategy right now, but he hasn't done that.

In my 17 visits to Iraq, I have seen good months and bad months. Since December, I think it's pretty extraordinary that we have won back Anbar province, an all-Sunni province. The irony is, we had given it up, and it had become a mini Afghanistan with al Qaeda acting like the Taliban. The tribal leaders came to us and said, help us get rid of them.

If we were not there to do that, they would be stuck with an Afghanistan with a Taliban type leadership in all of the Sunni area in Anbar province. But, fortunately, we didn't pull the rug out from under them. We are there to help them.

I think there are at least two inconvenient truths that we are dealing with. One inconvenient truth is the one that Al Gore talks about, which I wish more of us paid attention to, and that's global warming. The other inconvenient truth is what the 9/11 Commission report says, we are confronting Islamist terrorists.

Islamist terrorists have made it very clear that this is ground zero. If we were to leave Iraq, Iraq, in my judgment, would be like Afghanistan, with no troops to prevent the insurgents to do just what the Taliban did. I just hope and pray that we find a way to work together, that we look at bringing the Iraq Study Group presentation before us, because we all say we can support it. Let's build on what we can agree.

I conclude by making this point. We ask the Shia, Sunnis and Kurds to work together and reach out to each other, but Democrats and Republicans are having a hard time reaching out and working together. Bring forward a bipartisan proposal and see how well it could do on the House floor.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to yield 1 minute to my good friend and distinguished colleague from California (Mrs. CAPPS).

Mrs. CAPPS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of this bill to finally end this disastrous war. President Bush's war in Iraq has been the biggest foreign policy catastrophe in our Nation's history. We have been distracted from doing the job in Afghanistan, the Nation that harbored al Qaeda. Hundreds of billions of dollars have evaporated into the sands of Iraq while vital needs have gone unmet at home. Our international reputation has been battered and bruised. Our Army has been hollowed out.

The war has cut short the lives of more than 3,600 of our bravest citizens, injured tens of thousands more. Yet this President continues to insist that we remain in Iraq.

Today we must tell this President he is wrong. We must take a stand against this tragic war, begin the hard work of repairing our foreign policy. We must listen to the American people and vote to end this war.

Let us truly support our troops and vote to bring them home.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to Mr. PRICE of Georgia.

(Mr. PRICE of Georgia asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlelady for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, this is a sad and disappointing day for this House and for America. Once again, the majority is placing politics over national security, politics over reasoned policy, politics and partisanship over citizens and sanity.

Clearly this bill was not written in response to what our generals think, whose interim report was released just hours ago. Instead, it was written in reaction to polls and to political pressure from MoveOn.org and others. This isn't a thoughtful piece of legislation to achieve success in Iraq or success for America.

The lack of definition for a limited presence included in the bill reveals that this is just another cynical attempt by the majority to politically pander. How terribly disappointing.

In effect, this legislation is a vote of no confidence in our military commanders, and it's a shot of encouragement to al Qaeda. It's pure political opportunism, and it's devoid of military strategy.

As Members of Congress, we have a greater responsibility than just to politics. We have a responsibility to do what is in the best interest of long-term American security. We must be thoughtful. We must be deliberate in our actions.

We have a capable leader, General David Petraeus, unanimously approved by the Senate, the expert in counterinsurgency strategy. He was given by this Congress, just a few weeks ago, until September, to make positive progress in Iraq and report.

But this majority isn't interested in what our military commanders are capable of, or the situation on the ground. Their only interest is politics, in raising the white flag and in coming home without any thought or definition as to when or where they are willing to defend our security.

But because the political climate is ripe, the majority wants to undercut our troops. It's upsetting, it's sad, and it's very disconcerting that politics would trump national security.

This bill signals to our enemies that it doesn't matter what the commanders say. It says that thoughtful military strategy takes a back seat to good politics.

This isn't an exit strategy, it's a political strategy. How terribly disappointing.

I respectfully ask my colleagues to vote ''no'' on this bill and to commit to positively working together on behalf of the American people and American security.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, before yielding to our last speaker, I want to express my disgust and outrage at this arrogance which we have just heard.

The previous speaker assumes that there is a monopoly of virtue and wisdom on one side. That is not the case.

We have listened to our colleagues on the other side with respect and attention, and that is exactly what we demand of every single Member on the Republican side. This was an appalling spectacle debasing what has thus far been a fine and noble debate.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 2 minutes to the conscience of this House, my good friend from Georgia, Congressman JOHN LEWIS.

Mr. LEWIS of Georgia. I am going to thank my friend, my colleague, Chairman LANTOS, for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this resolution. This resolution is not a panacea. It will not get us out of Iraq tomorrow, next week or next month, but it is a step that will bring an end to this madness.

Our President, the commander in chief, told us a few days ago, that the surge is just beginning when he deployed more troops 6 months ago. He asked Members of Congress to wait. He is telling the American people to be patient.

We cannot wait. We cannot be patient. The American people want an end to this war and end it now.

How many more of our young people must die before we realize enough is enough? One more day of involvement is too many. One more death is one too many. This war is not worthy of another drop of human blood.

It is leaving a stain on the moral fabric of this Nation and destroying our credibility in the community of nations. We will never find the answer to Iraq down the barrel of a gun or in the warhead of a missile.

Vote for this resolution and bring this war to an end and bring it to an end now.

□ 1400

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield the balance of our time to the distinguished chairman of the Armed Services Committee, Mr. SKELTON.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and to insert extraneous materials in the RECORD on the bill, H.R. 2956.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Missouri?

There was no objection.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to my friend and colleague, the gentlelady from New Hampshire (Ms. SHEA-PORTER), a member of the Armed Services Committee.

Ms. SHEA-PORTER. Mr. Speaker, the National Counterterrorism Center recently issued a report entitled, ''Al Qaeda Better Positioned to Strike the West.'' This report concludes that al Qaeda has reorganized, regrouped, and is stronger now than it has been in years.

Yesterday, in the Armed Services Committee, we heard testimony that al Qaeda has established itself in the mountains along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border and is operating with relative impunity. On Tuesday, Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff says he has a gut feeling we will be attacked this summer.

For years, Democrats have been saying we need to focus our efforts on combating al Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan, but the President took our brave soldiers and our resources to Iraq. Now it appears that the President's disastrous policy of ignoring the real threats and bogging our military down in Iraq has borne fruit. The area and the country is destabilized and more dangerous to their neighbors and to us. Thanks to the President's policy, our military is now overextended, our Nation is deep in debt, and our international reputation is stained.

This cannot be allowed to continue. We are America the beautiful. We are the greatest country on Earth. We are the beacon of light and hope. We need to withdraw from Iraq, place our soldiers in a place where they can respond to any terrorist threats, and protect our borders as we once again reclaim our moral reputation.

Mr. SHADEGG. Mr. Speaker, I claim the time that has been yielded to me, and I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I have the greatest respect for the chairman of the Armed Services Committee, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON). I honor him and respect him deeply. But this legislation is deeply and fatally flawed. It will damage America and American interests for two reasons:

First, it is a purely political document, hopelessly vague and meaningless. Let me explain why. The bill turns on two key terms. One, that the United States transition to a ''limited presence'' in Iraq within the next 120 days; and, two, that the President provide a justification of ''the minimum force levels required to protect the United States' national security interests in Iraq.''

While I am pleased that the authors recognize that we are in Iraq to protect our national security interests, again, the legislation is hopelessly vague and therefore meaningless. Neither of these two key terms, ''limited presence'' and ''minimum force level required to protect U.S. national security interests'' is defined. Oh, the bill has a definition section and other terms are defined, but ''limited presence'' and ''minimum force level required to protect U.S. national security interests'' aren't defined.

You might ask yourself, why would the authors of the measure leave two such critically important terms undefined? Well, the answer is easy: Because this bill is not about policy; this bill is about politics.

The chairman of the Armed Services Committee knows exactly why these terms are not defined, and indeed the Democratic leadership knows why these terms are not defined. They are not defined because they need ambiguity. Indeed, ambiguity in this legislation is essential to its passage. They know that they can't agree on what the meanings of these terms are. You see, if they defined ''limited presence'' as too many troops, then their most liberal, most antiwar Members would not vote for the legislation. They couldn't. And, if they defined limited presence too low, then their Blue Dog Members would not support the bill. Again, this bill is about beating up on the President and about scaring nervous Members of Congress.

Again, let's look at the other term, ''minimum force levels required to protect U.S. national security interests.'' Why not define what that minimum is? Answer, again, if they define it too high, those who want out tonight and want our force levels at the lowest conceivable level couldn't vote for the bill. And if they define it too low, then those who recognize we face a threat from Iran and other regions' interests wouldn't vote for the bill. It is deeply flawed for those reasons.

And I would ask proponents of the bill what they would say if the President, as he could under the language of the bill, were to decide that ''limited presence'' means 154,000 troops, just 1,000 fewer than we have now? That would comply with the letter of the bill, but it wouldn't satisfy proponents of the bill.

And what if the President, as he can under the language of the bill, were to define the term ''minimum force level required to protect U.S. national interests'' not as 155,000 troops as we have today, but rather at 500,000 troops?

You see, they can't agree on those terms. I wonder how many of the Members realize that the critical terms in this bill aren't defined.

The bill is also flawed for a second reason, and that is that it reneges on the essential agreement Congress struck just 2 weeks ago. It is a little bit like Lucy pulling the football out from under Linus just before he kicks it. Here, don't rely on my opinion; rely instead on today's Washington Post. You see, today's Washington Post editorial makes the case for me. The Washington Post, not exactly a conservative journal, says, ''It seems like just weeks ago, because it was, that Congress approved funding for the war in Iraq and instructed General David H. Petraeus to report back on the war's progress in September.'' Ladies and gentlemen, this isn't September.

The Post goes on to write, ''Before Congress begins ordering withdrawals, it should at least give those generals the months they asked for to see whether their strategy can offer some hope.'' We owe it to those generals to give them, as The Washington Post says, the months they asked for, but, instead, we have given them 27 days.

I urge my colleagues to oppose this bill.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to my friend, my colleague, the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. BOSWELL).

Mr. BOSWELL. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman for this opportunity to speak. I rise in support of this legislation.

Much has been said these past years about the extent of the U.S. engagement in Iraq. The Iraqi people have made progress. Saddam is gone. They have had elections. We are told they have got over 300,000 Iraqi police and soldiers trained, equipped, and in the field. They are engaged in a civil war, and we cannot be involved in trying to referee that. As well as others in this body, I have been given assurances that they have that many troops.

I believe the war in Iraq has had a serious negative effect on the readiness of our brave men and women in uniform who are serving with honor and distinction. Their deployments and, oftentimes, redeployments without adequate time at home to rest and train is affecting our Nation's ability to meet future contingencies. As it stands today, listen up, as it stands today, we do not have, repeat, do not have a single combat-ready brigade ready to be deployed.

The United States cannot chart the destiny of the people of Iraq. The Iraqi Government must take responsibility for its own nation, and this legislation puts us on the path to see to that worthy and noble cause.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, at this time I yield 1 minute to my colleague, my friend, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CUMMINGS).

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this legislation.

The interim report released by the President today details exactly what I anticipated, a lack-of-progress report which demonstrates that the Iraqi Government has made the least progress on those key benchmarks that are vital to achieving stabilization.

The President at a press conference earlier today stressed the usual line of excuses that he has far too often utilized in the past, stating that we need to give General Petraeus time to show that the plus-up is effective and stress the importance of waiting until the September 15 progress report is released before drawing conclusions on the policy in Iraq. However, the President forgot to mention that General Petraeus said in an interview just last month that the chances of having a stable Iraqi Government in place by September are slim to none. Those are his words.

Frankly, our troops need our support, and that support must be their redeployment, which will end the continued bloodshed.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the chairman of the Strategic Forces Subcommittee of the Armed Services Committee, my friend, my colleague, the gentlelady from California (Mrs. TAUSCHER).

Mrs. TAUSCHER. Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to voice my very strong support for Chairman SKELTON's legislation. It represents an unequivocal belief that the United States cannot and should not be in the business of fighting Iraq's civil war.

For over 4 years, it has been clear to me that our troops successfully and bravely accomplished the mission authorized by the President in the fall of 2002.

Today's report that our troops have done their job but the Iraqi Government has not underscores the deep problems with the Bush administration's approach. We are no longer at war with Iraq's Government; instead, our forces are caught in the middle of an escalating sectarian conflict in Iraq, with no end in sight. Yet, the President continues to blindly stay the course, with disastrous and deadly consequences.

Chairman SKELTON's bill would make significant reductions in our troop presence by April of 2008. Democrats, along with our Republican colleagues who no longer trust the President's leadership, are doing all we can to change the President's full speed ahead mismanagement of the war in Iraq and divert the policy toward returning our troops home sooner and safer.

This more responsible presence, which limits U.S. presence to fighting

terrorism and training Iraq forces, will be a first step in restoring stability in Iraq and the readiness of our military which has been badly damaged over the last 4 years.

I appreciate Chairman SKELTON's leadership on this matter, and I urge my colleagues to support this commonsense approach.

Mr. SHADEGG. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 2 minutes to the gentlelady from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACKBURN).

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Arizona.

And while I have the utmost respect for the chairman, I disagree with him on this resolution and I do rise to oppose the resolution today.

I guess I don't like the rhetoric of defeat. And I think that if we look at the situation in Iraq and if we look at the global war on terror, we have to ask ourselves: If we accept defeat at the hands of the terrorists, then what type message are we going to send? And I don't think that we would like that. Because if we pull out now, it is going to say that the U.S. is weak in the war on terror. It is going to say that we accept roving death squads in the streets of Baghdad, that we accept ethnic cleansing and a region engulfed in all-out chaos. That is the message we send. Just as when we were children, our actions carry a message with them.

Our soldiers deserve the confidence of their leaders, and not second-guessing by politicians that are a half world away. I think that they need to know that we are with them.

I had a message from a Marine parent. And they said, You know, we have our men out there fighting every day. They are using all the tools available to them. They are in combat. They are in patrols. They are using technology to stabilize, to train Iraqi troops. Then at night they come home, they come back to that post, that forward operating base, and they hammer out e-mails and blogs to those of us here to help combat the rhetoric coming out of Washington, DC.

General Petraeus, Ambassador Crocker have a plan, the Baghdad Security Plan. We find out now much of Baghdad is more secure than it was. Most of the troops to carry out this plan just landed, just got there 2 weeks ago to start implementing the plan. I think that for us to second-guess is inappropriate. I think that it may be the fashionable thing to want to pull out.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from New Jersey, a member of the Armed Services Committee, my friend and colleague, Mr. ANDREWS.

(Mr. ANDREWS asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend for yielding.

I support this legislation because it will make America safer. Our safety depends upon stability in Iraq.

Now, there are two ways to achieve stability in Iraq. The first is to prop up the present government and hope it succeeds.

□ 1415

That has failed. The best evidence of that failure is from Iraqi leaders themselves. Last weekend, a Shiite Member of Iraq's legislature said, in the absence of enough security forces, authorities should help residents arm themselves for their own protection. The Sunni president of Iraq said, people have a right to expect from the government and security agencies protection for their lives, land, honor and property, Mr. al-Hashemi said. But in the case of the inability of Iraqi security forces, the people have no choice but to take up their own defense.

This government has failed, and we are spending the precious blood of our sons and daughters to prop it up.

The second way to achieve stability in Iraq is to compel a political solution. This resolution will do that. It deserves our support.

Mr. SHADEGG. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. KING).

Mr. KING of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, I would start out with the title of this, the Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act. Positively Orwellian to name a resolution the Redeployment From Iraq Act. I have gone back and revisited George Orwell, and I can tell you this says, the Cut and Run From Iraq Act. And however you want to cut it, that's part of it.

Then it says, be moved in a safe and orderly manner. And I'd like to know from the other side, was the helicopter lifting people off of the U.S. Embassy in Saigon, was that safe and orderly? Would that comply with your definition?

Another point, we have in this Congress constitutional responsibilities and authorities with regard to war. The first thing we can do in this Congress is declare war. The second thing we can do is to raise an army and a navy, and the third thing is to fund it, not to micromanage it. This is another piece of micromanagement. This is another piece of moving us down the path towards what history will record as a defeat on the floor of Congress, not a defeat in the field of battle.

Von Clausewitz said the object of war is to destroy the enemy's will and ability to conduct war. And we understand that if you don't have the will, it doesn't matter what your ability is. We're the only unchallenged super power in the world, and you're breaking down the will of the American people.

Sun Tzu said it more simply. ''Supreme excellence in warfare lies in destruction of your enemy's will to resist an advance of perceptible hostilities.'' And yet the American people's will has been systematically undermined by the debate here on this floor, by the debate in the national news media. And I question, in the face of the opposition that we have to our will here in this country, if we ever can manage the effort to rise up and defend freedom with this kind of support that we lack.

And then, when Mr. PRICE of Georgia lays out that the Defeatocrats in Congress are invested in defeat, the former gentleman from California rose up and squealed. And being the leading number one pork-producing district in America, I can tell you, when you throw a rock into the pigpen, the ones that squeal are the ones you hit.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, at this time I yield 1 minute to my friend, my colleague, a gentleman who is a member of the Armed Services Committee, Mr. COURTNEY from Connecticut.

Mr. COURTNEY. Mr. Speaker, last week, during my work period at home, my district office in Norwich was visited by a young Army enlisted man who had in one hand his orders for his fourth deployment over the last 4 years. Over the last 4 years, he did two 1-year deployments in Iraq and one 7-month deployment in Afghanistan.

In his other hand he held a bag of medication, anti-anxiety medication, including Zoloft, because of the post-traumatic stress which we got actually diagnosed from a treating psychiatrist a few days later, which confirmed that his deployments have taken him to the breaking point. That is the dirty little secret about this surge policy, which is that we've broken the ground forces of this country.

This legislation crafted by Mr. SKELTON, whose number one focus as chairman of the Armed Services Committee is always about raising and maintaining an armed force that can protect our national interest, is desperately needed, primarily for the people who have borne the disproportionate share of this war, which is the people who serve in our uniform and their families.

It is easy for us to talk about commitment in this chamber. It's time to stand up for the real people who are sacrificing for that commitment.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to my friend, my colleague, the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. TANNER).

Mr. TANNER. Mr. Speaker, I understand this or any administration's defensive posture when it comes to criticism of policy. And I understand the members of his party feeling the need to defend it. This interim report, ordinarily, I would be one who would wait until September. But this interim report that shows an appalling lack of progress on the political front in Iraq leads me to this conclusion.

I was on active duty for 4 years during Vietnam, and I went down to Vietnam Wall the other night; 50-something thousand dead American names down there. We have now, 3,500-plus dead American names on the Iraq wall.

And what was true then, to me, is true now. And General Petraeus himself said it not long ago when he said, military action is necessary, but any student of history recognizes that no military solution to a problem like

Iraq is there. Military action may be necessary, but it is not sufficient. There needs to be a political aspect.

The political aspect, as reported in this interim report, shows this: Of the 275 members of the Iraqi parliament, over one-third are presently boycotting meetings. Over one-third of the ministers are boycotting the meetings. Two years after the Iraqi elections, the government there is dysfunctional.

Now just listen to General Petraeus's words. We have to have a political aspect. And this present strategy, whether the surge works or not, is beside the point. These people are unwilling or unable to come together, after 2 years of a government, to work together to build any kind of civil society that we can support.

I think that it is now time, with this interim report and the lack of political progress there, to send a message. Nobody's talking about precipitous withdrawal. What we are talking about is this Congress engaging with this administration to support the troops and help them from this morass.

Mr. SHADEGG. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to inquire as to the time remaining on each side.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. ROSS). The gentleman from Arizona has 21 minutes remaining, and the gentleman from Missouri has 73 minutes remaining.

Mr. SHADEGG. Mr. Speaker, at this time I am pleased to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from California, the former attorney general of California, Mr. LUNGREN.

Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN of California. Mr. Speaker, since I consider the gentleman from Missouri such a stalwart Member of this House, and a friend, I rise not in anger but in sorrow as I oppose his amendment. I have profound disagreements with the specifics of this particular bill.

I came to Congress, returned to Congress after 9/11 precisely because of 9/11, because I thought we needed, as a country, to respond to the threat of Islamofascism in an effective way and that we needed to recognize that our war against Islamofascism was a multifronted war. And one of the fronts of that war is Iraq. You can argue whether it's the number one front or not, but it is important. And I think everyone would agree. And what we do there is important. And how we act there is important. And when we withdraw, even though we call it a redeployment, that is important. It is a message that goes beyond Iraq. It goes to all of those who would do us ill in this world.

And I can't understand, when we had General Petraeus look us in the eye just a couple of weeks ago and say to Members, I believe in my mission; I've told my men and my women that I believe in the mission; and if I didn't believe in it, I would tell you immediately because I'm not going to sacrifice men and women in vain. And he said, give me the time to do it. And we said, yes, sir, you have the time. And now we say, when he's over there with his men and women, we're not going to give you the time. We're going to second guess.

I don't understand how you prosecute a war. One Member got up and said, let's end this war by passing this resolution. You end a war usually in America by winning, by defeating the enemy.

We have this bill up now. We're going to have a bill up in another couple of weeks that's going to tell us we have to change the habeas corpus issue, we have to grant habeas corpus to unlawful enemy combatants, for the first time in the history of our Nation, putting us at a position that we never would have had in World War II. It would have crippled us during World War II.

And then we're going to hear, close down Guantanamo. Let's look at this bill as just a piece of the approach that the other side is taking.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to my colleague, my friend, the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. LINCOLN DAVIS).

Mr. LINCOLN DAVIS of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this resolution. The responsible redeployment of our troops is a brave step toward a new direction for the war in Iraq. It will remove our troops from the most dangerous kill zones in Iraq and refocus our efforts toward defeating terrorism across the globe.

The decision to redeploy is one that I have not come to lightly. This bill gives the President the power to maintain a military presence in the region while, at the same time, imposing the accountability the American people demand that we enforce.

Four years into a difficult and prolonged engagement, I had hoped we would have seen better proposals for progress in quelling the violence. Throughout the course of our debate, whether on the air waves, Internet or in the halls of Congress, we've heard much of the supposed failures of our military goals. We hear often of continued strife and instability in the nation we sought to set free; of an Iraqi economy crippled by the trials of war; of parliamentary disputes, civil unrest and sectarian violence; and of a peace we all believe in that has yet to take place in Iraq.

But these stories, however true, are only a portion of our efforts. They are the darkest side of our endeavors meant to do good and sinfully omit the triumphs and victories of our sons and daughters who've done a great service.

For all that remains undone, our troops have accomplished a great deal. We brought free and open elections to a nation once shackled by a tyrannical regime. Iraq has experienced freedoms unimagined before, and Saddam Hussein was put to death for his crimes.

It is in this vein that we must continue our presence in Iraq and Afghanistan, the greater Middle East and around the world, for it is essential to our security.

As we prepare to redeploy our troops from Iraq, we must commit as well to remain ever vigilant in the face of terrorism. Whether they are threats to America and her allies, whether radicalism threatens the foundations of the natural freedoms we've sought so hard to prove, we must prepare ourselves to face those threats and bring their agents either to justice or a swift demise.

We must continue our hunt for Osama Bin Laden and the instruments of al Qaeda. While I am behind the efforts to redeploy, our military must be equipped and prepared to protect American civilians, property and interests at home and abroad.

As I prepared my case today on the merits of redeployment, I was reminded of a speech delivered by Congressman Abraham Lincoln on January 12, 1848, that railed against President James K. Polk of Tennessee for bringing our country to war with Mexico. Lincoln believed that Polk had stretched the facts to fit the case for war, just as many have expressed their belief here that our President stretched the truth about WMDs to make his case for war.

President Polk's war with Mexico yielded the borders that stand today. Our nations endured the battle of Vera Cruz, the battle of Mexico City, but the results of the Mexican-American war remain, and our two countries live as partners in peace. The results of the war yielded positive results. History has favorably judged James K. Polk, just as history will judge this President.

So as the President considers signing the order to redeploy, I hope he will. I implore him to consider the advice of Mr. Lincoln.

Mr. SHADEGG. Mr. Speaker, at this time I am pleased to yield 4 minutes to the distinguished chairman of the Republican Study Committee, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. HENSARLING).

Mr. HENSARLING. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding. I thank him for his outstanding leadership on this floor and within the Republican Study Committee.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very happy to come to the floor today and debate this resolution with my fellow members of the Republican Study Committee. But if press reports are to be believed, I am disturbed by the reason that we are here, and that is, is this a poll driven resolution?

We all know that our Democratic colleagues now have one of the lowest congressional approval ratings in almost 50 years. We know they don't want to spend time on this floor debating how little has been achieved in their tenure, and perhaps they want to spend even less time talking about what they have achieved; the single largest tax increase in American history, a secret earmarking plan gone awry, and a spendorama, spending millions and millions on peanut storage, NASA and dairy products, put into a

bill to support our troops in harm's way.

□ 1430

Putting polls aside, why are we here? Make no mistake about it. What we are debating today is whether or not to declare defeat in Iraq, the battlefront in our war against radical Islam.

Everyone knows that fighting this battle in Iraq is costly, but losing this battle in Iraq is even costlier.

Mr. Speaker, sometimes life presents us with lousy options, but that is a reality with which we must deal. Iraq must be seen in the larger context of our war with radical Islam. The battle lines are drawn; and whether or not we like it, they are drawn in Iraq.

Don't take my word for it. Take the word of Osama bin Laden: ''The epicenter of these wars is Baghdad. Success in Baghdad will be success for the United States. Failure in Iraq is the failure of the United States. Their defeat in Iraq will mean defeat in all of their wars.'' And we have to soberly reflect upon the enemy that we are facing. Listen to the number two in al Qaeda, al Zawahiri: ''Al Qaeda has the right to kill 4 million Americans, 2 million of them children.''

Mr. Speaker, two of those children are my children. And I take this very, very seriously.

Al Qaeda has further vowed to expel the Americans from Iraq. They have vowed that they will ''launch a jihad wave to the secular countries neighboring Iraq.''

Again, this is the enemy we face and we face him foremost in Iraq. If we leave Iraq before subduing him, he will follow us here to our shores. And make no mistake about it. The consequences are immense. Read the National Intelligence Estimate. Read the report of the Iraq Study Group. Precipitous withdrawal declaring defeat will not end this war. Instead, it will make it worse. It will send it to neighboring countries. It may lead to genocide.

Now, I have listened to the debate of my colleagues carefully. Some still complain about the decision to go in. It's a moot point. Many want to complain about mistakes or incompetence of 3 years, 2 years, or perhaps 1 year ago that may or may not be accurate. Today they are irrelevant.

The question is what do we do now? We have a new commander. We have a new strategy. We have a report due in September. We have signs of hope. Let's give it a chance. There is too much at stake to declare defeat today.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Maryland, my friend (Mr. GILCHREST).

Mr. GILCHREST. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Missouri for yielding.

The question before us today is if failure in Iraq is not an option and staying the course is not working, what are our options? It is vital that we focus our attention this morning and this afternoon on that question, then formulate an integrated set of proposals that include the basic premise that a stable Iraq and a stable Middle East is in the vital interest of the United States and the international community, also taking into consideration here the military's assertion, through General Petraeus, that the war cannot be won with a military alone. An integrated set of proposals for an overall strategy then must include, which is in this bill before us today, diplomatic efforts, political efforts, economic efforts, social, humanitarian, cultural, and a military component. We must also garner the constructive engagement of all of Iraq's neighbors.

When Nixon went to China, the domino theory of Vietnam became irrelevant. When Nixon went to China, there was a Sino-Soviet split that advantaged the United States. If we go to Iran, al Qaeda in Iraq will be irrelevant. If we go to Iran, the idea of a spread of terrorism, of those problems in the Middle East will be eliminated.

The idea that this piece of legislation moves forward in the next step of the Iraq Study Group is, in my judgment, on the right mark. It is profound. And I thank the gentleman from Missouri for yielding and for bringing this legislation to the floor.

Mr. SHADEGG. Mr. Speaker, at this time I am pleased to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. WESTMORELAND).

Mr. WESTMORELAND. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Arizona for yielding, and I want to thank the gentleman from Missouri for being an honorable gentleman during this tough time.

Mr. Speaker, I want to start with a couple of warnings. First, I would suggest anyone on the Republican side shaking hands with the majority might want to be careful because they have been licking their fingers and sticking them into the political wind.

Second, government opinion by polls may lead to short-term success at the ballot box, but in this case it could lead to a catastrophe on a global scale.

We in this House best serve the United States, Iraq, and the world community if we establish conditions in Iraq that allow for a somewhat orderly transition to autonomy for Iraqis. A quick withdrawal from Iraq would set off a fuse that would eventually blow up not only Iraq but quite possibly surrounding countries as well.

Iraq foreign minister on Monday warned against a quick withdrawal by the United States, saying, ''The dangers could be a civil war dividing the country, regional wars, and the collapse of the state.''

Today when we talk about the Holocaust or when we talk about Rwanda or when we talk about the Sudan, we ask how could good people stand by and let this happen. It is an important lesson to remember as we pull out our voting cards today. Remember, we are trying to help. If we pull out of Iraq, we guarantee that the Tigris and the Euphrates will run red with the blood of innocents. We guarantee a safe haven for the training camps of al Qaeda. We guarantee more free rein for the death squads of Moqtada al Sadr. We guarantee a civil war between Shiites and Sunnis. We guarantee even more or worse instability in the region, perhaps for decades.

No matter how we vote today, we are not going to stop the war. We may stop fighting, but we are not going to stop the war. As Indonesian jihadist leader Abu Bakar Bashir said, ''All Muslims should fight to create an Islamic state. There are only two options for Muslims, to win or to die.''

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to my colleague and friend, the gentlewoman from California, member of the Armed Services Committee (Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ).

Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ of California. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman for yielding.

I rise today as a cosponsor of H.R. 2956, and although I support this resolution, I must express my sadness that it has come to this point.

This President was wrong when he claimed that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction. He has had over 4 years. He has asked for more time, for more troops, for more surges. And regardless of what our military experts and our troops on the ground say, this President continues to claim that we are winning the war in Iraq.

Mr. President, what reports are you reading? Whom are you listening to? Certainly not the reports that I have read or the military officials I have spoken to, who tell a very different story about what is happening in Iraq. To me it is with sadness that this Congress has to tell you that your war in Iraq is a failure and that we will not let you leave our brave men and women over there when you have no plan to allow them to succeed. We will not let them be targets any longer.

History will show, Mr. President, that your war was a failure. But today the Congress stood up to you and said enough is enough.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to my colleague and friend from the leadership, the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. LARSON).

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I thank Mr. SKELTON for yielding me this time.

They buried Andre Craig, 24 years old, last week. He died in the service of his country. His family held a press conference prior to that and said, he was exhausted.

Mr. SKELTON has put forward a piece of legislation, not a resolution, a bill that address the men and women in the armed services, that addresses the problems that they face on a daily basis in Iraq.

There is a difficult choice today to be made. Our colleagues on the other side of the aisle are honorable people. They understand as well exactly what it is

like to go to a funeral service, to look into the eyes of these families, many who have been deployed three and four times, who are stretched to the maximum. You know what they are experiencing. It is hard to reconcile, because we know you are honorable people, the indifference that seems to lie in the choice between the blind loyalty to the worst foreign policy endeavor in the history of the country and the men and women who are there paying for it every single day. You are right, emotions run deep.

How many more of these services will it take for us to face the truth and the facts? People have come to this floor and said, well, you know that the President is going to veto this. One thing we know for sure is where the President stands and what he has said he will do and how this will be passed on to another administration. But the thing here is what we will do, what you will do.

Find your voice. Speak on behalf of the troops. Follow IKE SKELTON.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to my colleague, a member of the Armed Services Committee, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES).

Mr. JONES of North Carolina. I thank the chairman for this time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 2956.

For more than 4 years, our men and women in uniform have faithfully, skillfully served in Iraq. This legislation makes clear that the Government of Iraq must now be responsible for Iraq's future.

Mr. Speaker, when Marine General ''Jack'' Sheehan, a former top NATO commander, declined to serve the White House as war czar for Afghanistan and Iraq, he stated his reasons for not accepting this position: ''The very fundamental issue is they don't know where the hell they're going.'' That is what Marine Corps GEN Jack Sheehan said. General Sheehan's statement is why the Congress and the administration need to work together to develop an end point to the war strategy in Iraq. It is time for Congress to meet its constitutional responsibility by defining what victory in Iraq will look like.

Stay the course is not the answer. As Colin Powell said last week, ''We have to face the reality of the situation that is on the ground and not what we would want it to be. It is not a civil war that can be put down or solved by the Armed Forces of the United States.'' Colin Powell, I quoted him. That is his statement.

We are now in the 5th year in Iraq, and 3,611 Americans have died in the war. Mr. Speaker, to this date I have sent over 6,400 letters to the families and extended families of our men and women in the military who have lost their lives in Afghanistan and Iraq, and every time I sign a letter, my heart aches.

Chairman SKELTON's plan provides a comprehensive strategy to maintain and advance the diplomatic, political, and economic components of United States national security interests in Iraq. It has taken this country in a direction that it needs to consider.

Mr. Speaker, I close by reminding this Congress what Rudyard Kipling said in his writings known as ''Epitaphs of War,'' and we need to all be responsible for this, and this is my quote from him: ''If any question why we died, tell them because our fathers lied.''

□ 1445

Mr. SHADEGG. Mr. Speaker, at this time, I'm pleased to yield 2 minutes to the distinguished Member of the Republican Study Committee, the gentleman from South Carolina, Mr. GRESHAM BARRETT.

Mr. BARRETT of South Carolina. I thank the gentleman for yielding. And I hope the chairman of the Armed Services Committee knows how much I respect him and truly love this man.

Mr. Speaker, I know of no other place than Washington, DC, where it's okay to look a man in the face, tell him we're going to give him the time, the resources and everything he needs to accomplish a mission, and then halfway through the process, say, oops, I'm sorry, time's up. We made a mistake. Mission over.

No one person I know or have known executing this war on radical Islam has more credibility than David Petraeus, a gentleman who was confirmed unanimously in the United States Senate, but instead of giving GEN David Petraeus, a man whose boots are on the ground, a fair opportunity and allowing him the time he needs to better implement the plan and report back, we once again see legislators trying to micromanage this war. The problem is, we've turned this into a political war, a war where politicians are pulling the strings, not the man we said could do it.

If anyone can pull this off, David Petraeus can. If any armed services in the world can be successful, the men and women of the United States Armed Forces can. But let them accomplish the mission. Let them continue to win. Let them bring us victory.

In recent weeks, we've witnessed in Great Britain how real the threat remains. Whether we're talking about Iraq, Pakistan, Afghanistan, the enemy is there, the enemy is real; and to ignore the threat that they pose to this Nation is unconscionable.

We owe it to our troops on the ground, to those who have served, to those who have died, and the American people to allow the plan General Petraeus developed to take effect.

Mr. Speaker, the stakes are too high. Keep this country safe. Keep this country strong. Do the courageous thing. Vote against this legislation.

Mr. SKELTON. I yield 1 minute to the chairwoman of the Subcommittee on Military Personnel of the Armed Services Committee, Mrs. DAVIS of California.

Mrs. DAVIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 2956.

I just returned from Iraq. The trip was only a snapshot of what was happening on the ground, but I heard two messages: One, we need more time to train Iraqi troops and leadership; but two, progress is not evident. We are taking two steps back for every step forward. Our men and women are serving heroically, but it is clear our progress is limited, at best. So where do we go from here?

Mr. Speaker, we need a plan that moves beyond the surge to a time frame that says we will continue to support Iraqis in a limited capacity but that we will redeploy the bulk of our forces within a prescribed period of time.

We are all concerned about the impact our redeployment could have on our adversaries, and the region as a whole. However, the reality on the ground is that, whether it's in 6 months or 2 years, the size of our current force cannot be sustained. The true focus must be on how we disengage, how we and our allies work together to support our aims for a free and open society in Iraq.

Our choices are bad, awful and worse. But this legislation, I believe, will move us a step closer to a day when Iraq's leaders and politicians can take back control of their country and our men and women can return home to their families and a grateful Nation.

Mr. SHADEGG. Mr. Speaker, at this time, I am very pleased to yield 5½ minutes to the distinguished Republican whip, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. BLUNT).

Mr. BLUNT. I thank the gentleman for yielding, and for the effort he and others are making on the floor here today.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to refer to this editorial today from the Washington Post which says, ''It seems like just weeks ago''—because it was that—''that Congress approved funding for the war in Iraq and instructed General David Petraeus to report back on the war's progress in September. Before Congress begins ordering withdrawals, they should at least give those generals the months they asked for to see whether their strategy can offer some help.'' Mr. Speaker, I think that, in a nutshell, sums up what we ought to be talking about today instead of what we are talking about today.

I've heard this resolution referred to as a ''new way forward,'' but it doesn't provide a new way forward. It, frankly, serves no purpose in meeting the challenge that we face today with our totalitarian enemies.

I'm told that, yesterday, in the House Appropriations Committee, 45 minutes was spent debating whether cats should be declawed before they were allowed into public housing; 45 minutes to decide whether cats should be declawed in public housing, and by the way, that committee decided they should, and no minutes spent to talk

about this bill. No hearing on an April 1 deadline. No outside testimony on a bill that was quickly put together to serve a purpose of, I believe, changing the subject of the failure of this Congress to get its other work done back to a subject that is obviously creating stress in America today, and that is, what do we do about the totalitarian enemies we face and their lack of appreciation for innocent human life?

Commanders in the field say that a responsible deployment from Iraq would take at least a year. Maybe that's why we didn't have a hearing on how long it would take to responsibly and safely leave Iraq. There was no testimony from the military about an April 1 deadline. In fact, I can't even find any evidence of any consultation with the military about an April 1 deadline.

And what does ''limited presence'' on page three of this, what does that mean? What does ''limited presence'' mean? I suppose it means whatever it needs to mean when you go home and explain why you voted for the bill, because it doesn't mean anything. Limited presence means nothing, and it's a key criteria of this approach.

The same people who say we went into Iraq without a well thought-out plan now want to leave without a plan at all. And that's what is wrong with what we're talking about today.

Let's go back to page three of the bill itself. The President is supposed to report back in January things like the projected number of armed forces necessary to carry out the missions. The projected annual cost of the missions. The projected duration of the missions, I guess to suggest that there really aren't going to be missions if you leave April 1 if you've been on the other side of this issue up to now, if a few weeks ago you were for giving the generals in the field up until September, and now you're for deciding what we're going to be doing in April without knowing what that September situation is about.

And it goes on, on page 3, to talk about whether it's necessary, I guess defining the missions, whether it's necessary to have Armed Forces to carry out the following missions; protecting United States diplomatic facilities and United States citizens, including members of the Armed Forces who are engaged in carrying out other missions. You can pretty much make this, I guess, whatever you want it to. Serving in rolls consistent with customary diplomatic positions. Engaging in actions to disrupt and eliminate al Qaeda and its affiliated organizations.

Now, we're going to decide, apparently the President should decide in January whether that continues to be an important thing, or whether training and equipping members of the Iraqi Armed Forces continues to be an important thing.

Where was the effort made to determine the impact on al Qaeda worldwide, or to determine the impact on Hezbollah or other agents of terror and how that would affect our security in the United States if we precipitously leave one more time, if we precipitously leave without a plan?

Only a few weeks ago, again, as others have verified all over the country in editorials today, I and others stood on this floor and said, our troops deserve a funding bill without strings and without congressional pork. Today, I'm here to say that they deserve a chance to carry out their mission without looking over their shoulder all the time to see what the Congress of the United States is about to do next.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentlelady from Texas, EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON.

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to Mr. SKELTON, the outstanding Congressman from Missouri.

I rise to support H.R. 2956. If we could stop this war today, it would please my constituents. And if we could do it without more violence, I would be picketing to do it.

All of us know, that have any common sense, that we cannot bring the troops home today, but we can develop a good strategy to make sure that they get the message in Iraq that we are coming home. We still have 150,336 troops over there. Are we going to stay until they all get killed?

We talk about how many have lost lives. I was a nurse in the Veterans' Administration for 15 years, and I saw the damaged lives of these veterans coming home from war. What are we doing for ourselves and the future? This is not a partisan issue, this is an issue that saves America.

Mr. Speaker, the most recent report from the Department of Defense, states there are 150,336 brave American troops in the middle of a violent civil war in Iraq.

Meanwhile, the President has repeatedly made it clear that nothing will discourage him from pursuing a war that has no end in sight.

Congress cannot and should not keep waiting for the President to change course.

We must change the course ourselves, 2008 must be a year of transition in Iraq. Iraq has to grow out of the shadow of the United States.

Iraq needs to take responsibility for its own decisions, learn from its own mistakes, and find its own solutions to its own problems.

Recently, the Iraq Study Group suggested that the time has since passed when one country alone could work alongside the Iraqi leadership to steer Iraq's future.

Rather, as the report says, "the United States should immediately launch a New Diplomatic Offensive to build an international consensus for stability in Iraq and the region."

This recommendation is perhaps the last-best hope for war weary Iraqis and Americans alike.

Mr. Speaker, our brave men and women are serving with great honor in Iraq. Their service has paved the way for a democratic society.

It is time for the Iraqi government to stand up, so our troops can begin to stand-down.

I urge my colleagues to support this legislation.

Mr. SKELTON. I yield 2 minutes to my colleague, my friend, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. VAN HOLLEN).

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. I thank the distinguished chairman of the Armed Services Committee.

Mr. Speaker, two separate headlines on the front page of today's Washington Post tell the sad story of two of the Bush Administration's biggest national security failures. First, its disastrous Iraq policy, and second, its failure to complete the mission against al Qaeda and the Taliban along the Afghan/Pakistan border.

One headline reads, ''CIA Said Instability Appeared Irreversible.'' The article describes how, on the same day last November, the Baker-Hamilton commission received two starkly different portrayals of what was happening in Iraq. One came from President Bush, who portrayed a rosy picture, and the other came from the man who President Bush put in charge of the CIA, General Hayden, who was responsible for providing a clear-eyed analysis based on cold facts. And what he reportedly told the commission was, and I quote, ''Instability of the Iraqi Government was irreversible.'' Irreversible, he said.

These starkly different portrayals of the situation go to the core of our problems in Iraq because the President has been in a state of denial. Happy talk is no substitute for a reality-based policy. And indeed, the President's decisions based on wishful thinking have led to decisions that have weakened our national security.

Yesterday, the U.S. intelligence experts confirmed the gloomy assessment that General Hayden made last November, and today's report to Congress confirms that the Iraqi Government has failed to make sufficient progress in key areas of national reconciliation.

The other headline on the front page of the paper today on Washington Post reads, ''U.S. warns of stronger al Qaeda and describes al Qaeda's growing presence and strength along the Afghan/Pakistan border and reveals the consequences of our failure to complete the job against al Qaeda in that area.''

Mr. Speaker, we must insist that the Iraqis assume greater responsibility for their own future, and we redouble our efforts against those who did attack us on September 11, 2001. That's what this bill is about.

It's time to change direction. I urge my colleagues to adopt this bill.

Mr. SHADEGG. I note the gentleman cited the Washington Post. I wonder if he has read the editorial today which says that we should be giving our troops at least until September.

Mr. Speaker, may I inquire as to how much time I have remaining?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Arizona has 5½ minutes remaining.

Mr. SHADEGG. I thank the Speaker.

I'm pleased to yield 2 minutes to a distinguished member of the Republican Study Committee, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. GINGREY).

□ 1500

Mr. GINGREY. Mr. Speaker, I want to take my 2 minutes to apologize to a few families from my district for having to listen, once again, to the Democratic leadership bringing forward a cut-and-run policy when these families have given their loved ones in this sacrifice.

I apologize to the Johnson family of Armuchee, Georgia, who sacrificed their son, Justin. I apologize to the Saylor family from Bremen, Georgia, who gave up their son, Paul. I apologize to the Clayton family of Marietta, who misses dearly their son, Captain Hayes Clayton. To Carey and Sally Brown, of Atlanta, I apologize to you for the loss of your son, Tyler. From my wife's hometown of Newnan, Georgia, I express my regret to Robert Stokely for the death of his son, Mike. Finally, I apologize to the widow of Jack Hensley from Marietta, a beheaded contract worker.

Mr. Speaker, what an appalling thing to do to these families, whose sons gave the last full measure of devotion defending liberty and fighting the terrorist Islamic extremists, to pull the rug out from under them and say: We are not going to give victory a chance. We are not even willing to wait until September. I think that it is appalling. I am ashamed of the Democratic leadership. I apologize to these families from my district who have given so much.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. All Members are reminded to direct their remarks to the Chair and not to others in the second person.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LEE), a friend and colleague.

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, first let me thank Chairman SKELTON for yielding, but also for his commitment to our Armed Forces, as the daughter, Mr. SKELTON, of a 25-year Army veteran who loves you dearly and thanks you for supporting our troops.

As a cofounder of the Out of Iraq Caucus, I rise in support of this bill. The President has dug us deep into a hole in Iraq. By setting a clear timeline for the redeployment of United States troops, we are standing with the American people to stop the digging. If we are to climb out of this deep hole, we are going to have to make sure that when our troops come home that they all come home. That means no permanent bases. It means ending our blind commitment to arming and training Iraqi security forces. It also means that come September, we must use the power of our purse, and we must begin to fully fund the safe redeployment of our young men and women and our contractors out of Iraq.

The civil war in Iraq is raging within the very security forces we are arming and training. Our weapons and expertise are being used for sectarian violence and for killing Americans and Iraqi civilians. This policy only further endangers our troops and fuels a civil war.

We must end the Bush administration's failed policy in Iraq. It has failed. We must reconsider this blind commitment to arming and training Iraqi security forces.

Let us support our troops, and I mean support our troops in a real way, by bringing them home. This is the will of the American people. That is the goal of the Out of Iraq Caucus. That is in the national security interests of our country.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the chairman, once again, for his leadership and for yielding.

Mr. SHADEGG. Mr. Speaker, at this time it is my privilege to yield the balance of our time to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. HOEKSTRA), a member of the Republican Study Committee and the ranking member on the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence.

Mr. HOEKSTRA. I thank my colleague from Arizona for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, as I listen to the debate today, I end up having a lot of more questions than I have answers. I have a question as to whether my colleagues on the other side of the aisle believe that the threat from radical jihadism is real or not. Have they read the latest Zawahiri statement, ''Advice of One Concerned,'' where he goes on to say in the statement, a global system, whose center and heart is the United States and the European Union? As for the rest of the states of the world, they are the outlying states.

It goes on to say, the strategy of al Qaeda, the only way to confront them, the core states, according to al Qaeda's theory, is by taking the war from the outlying states to the central states, in which case the damage and consequences of this damage will all take place in the central states.

Have they not read the other documents that come from al Qaeda that talk about what their strategy is? Their number one goal and objective is to defeat the United States and the coalition in Iraq, then to move out into the region and destabilize the other countries in the region, eliminate the State of Israel, establish the caliphate, Southern Europe, Northern Africa, the Middle East, stretch down into Asia and then establish Sharia law.

Do my colleagues on the other side of the aisle believe that radical Islam is a threat to the security of the United States and our allies, or not? If they don't, perhaps pulling out of Iraq is a good strategy. If they do believe that radical jihadism is a threat to the United States, if they do believe that looking at the reports in London, in Europe that radical jihadists actually have attacked in those places and that they may be attacking in the United States or planning to attack in the United States, the question becomes, if you are not willing to fight the threat of radical jihadism in Iraq, where will you engage radical jihadism, in other parts of the Middle East? Should we deploy our troops to other parts of the Middle East? Maybe we should just write off the Middle East and deploy into Northern Africa or into Western Europe, or maybe what we should do is bring them all home and redeploy them here in the United States, because they will follow us home.

So the question is, if you do believe it is a threat, where and when will you confront the threat that we face? Others have pointed it out. I have taken a look and read this resolution. I encourage all of the American people to read this bill. What does it say? Very, very little. It says that we will commence reductions of our troops. Commence reductions.

Exactly how many do you want to commence reducing? 100? 5,000? 50,000? Then by April 1 there will be a plan for a limited presence. What is ''limited presence''? There are some that would say that the number of troops we have today is a limited presence, because they may not be enough to get the job done. But the bill doesn't define where we go. This is no plan.

If this is the way forward, we are in big, big trouble, because it doesn't recognize the threat and it doesn't have a plan as to how we are going to move forward.

But there are other things that this Congress should be debating. As our minority whip said, we debated for 45 minutes as to whether cats should be declawed before moving into public housing.

The previous question that was defeated earlier today would have enabled us to deal with a real issue, and that is the modernization of FISA, our ability to listen to radical jihadists in other parts of the world as they are communicating their plans and intentions. Today, there is a massive loophole in FISA for radical jihadists who are outside of the United States to communicate, and our intelligence community is prohibited from listening to them. We provide them the full protection of American law, even though they are not United States citizens, even though they are outside of the United States, and even though they are radical jihadists. Let us fix this problem, and let's make sure that we fix it before we go home in August. We should have done it today.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 2 minutes to my dear friend and colleague from California (Ms. WATERS).

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank Chairman Ike Skelton for getting us to this point today, 1,581 days, 53 months, over 4 years since this President led this Nation to war in Iraq; 3,600 American soldiers killed, 27,000 American soldiers seriously injured, 60,000 to 100,000 Iraqis killed; $10 billion per month, $500 billion American dollars spent on this war.

A civil war is raging in Iraq; there is no credible government in Iraq; Iraq is

totally destabilized and Iraq refugees are flooding into neighboring countries; there is no coalition of the willing supporting the U.S. in this war; and we are well on our way to destabilizing the entire Middle East.

President Bush and the chief architect of this war, Vice President DICK CHENEY, are in denial about the disastrous mess they have created. Some of us have known for quite some time this war must end. BARBARA LEE, LYNN WOOLSEY and I and several other Members of Congress created the Out of Iraq Caucus over 2 years ago. We organized this caucus, but we were dismissed as bleeding heart liberals.

It has taken too long to get to this point we are at today. This bill will at least demand a strategy to get us out of Iraq and a deadline will be set. This has been a long time in coming.

However, Mr. Speaker, the proof of the pudding is in the eating. President Bush will apply all kinds of pressure, threaten, mislead, spend us blind and continue to pursue this immoral war, unless we decide that we are not going to fund this war anymore.

In the words of the people on the street who are organized against this war, Mr. President, not another nickel, not another dime, not another soldier, not this time.

Vote for this bill. It is a good start. And remember, in the final analysis, we have got to defund this war.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER) controls 40 minutes.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Mrs. MYRICK).

Mrs. MYRICK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in opposition to H.R. 2956. The battle in Iraq has left many of us frustrated, and rightly so. Progress is not as fast as most of us would like it to be.

Some in this House believe that we have lost the war and should withdraw immediately. Okay, so what happens then? We leave, then what? Does al Qaeda leave us alone? Can we disband the Department of Homeland Security? Can we announce that the threat from radical jihadism has ended?

These are the questions that aren't being discussed. Why? Because the answers are difficult. We need a long-term strategy that goes against the political pandering that is preventing us from achieving long-term national security.

As cochair of the House Antiterrorism Caucus, I have heard warnings that a withdrawal will only embolden al Qaeda and other radical Islamic jihad groups. They will carry out more suicide bombing attacks, behead more innocent Iraqi people, intimidate and suppress and ultimately recruit peace-loving Muslims around the world to their cause. And what happens to those Muslims who resist the radical jihadists? They will be killed.

This is not just my view. This is what the Islamists have been saying, and, more importantly, doing for the past few years. Muslims in the Middle East do not have freedom of religion and expression, as we do here. And while it is convenient to blame America for the problems in the Muslim world, we are afraid to place the blame on those who have caused those problems.

I believe passage of this bill will be a huge mistake in our long-term national strategy and security interests, and it must be defeated.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 1 minute to my friend and colleague from Ohio (Mr. WILSON).

Mr. WILSON of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, this legislation provides a plan for responsible redeployment of our troops. This is the time to set a new course. Setting a date certainly gives the Iraqis the incentive to actually work to meet some benchmarks.

Our military men and women are among our most precious resources. They are performing admirably with courage in a situation that they never should have been asked to be in in the first place. They are doing their job. Now we must do ours. We must bring them home.

On a recent trip to Walter Reed to visit a seriously wounded marine from my district in Pomeroy, Ohio, I saw again the damage this war has done. Not just to this young man, but to his family also. They have all put their jobs and their lives on hold to care for him.

His courage and conviction are not in question. That marine would go back to Iraq tomorrow if we asked him to. We must not ask. How much more blood should be shed? How many more families must we shatter? Enough is enough.

□ 1515

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I would like to yield at this time 5 minutes to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SAXTON). The distinguished gentleman has been the chairman in the past of the Terrorism Subcommittee and is an expert on special operations.

Mr. SAXTON. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I rise with great respect for the chairman of the Armed Services Committee and the author of this bill, but with strong opposition to H.R. 2956.

Mr. Speaker, the short title of this bill is the ''Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act.'' But, Mr. Speaker, this bill is not responsible. It is irresponsible. This bill is an irresponsible political act that will put our troops in danger and will result in catastrophic consequences for the United States, for the Iraqi people, for Israel, for the greater Middle Eastern region, and for the rest of the world.

As The Washington Post said in this morning's paper, this bill is being considered today for ''reasons having more to do with American politics than with Iraqi reality.''

We must oppose this bill for numerous reasons, but let me mention just three. First, this bill fails to highlight the consequences of reducing our force levels too early. Such consequences would have a devastating effect on Iraq, would embolden al Qaeda in Iran, and would have severe security impacts on Israel and throughout the Middle East.

Al Qaeda and its proxies are engaged in a jihad against the United States and against the West. Al Qaeda's second in command, al Zawahiri, reaffirmed in a July 4 speech an al Qaeda plan to use Iraq, Afghanistan and Somalia for jihadi planning and training against us.

Second, instead of putting forward legislation that offers an alternative to the plan being implemented by General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker, this political ploy calls for a vague ''troop reduction'' to be a ''limited presence'' in a ''safe and orderly manner'' within 120 days; but it fails to define any of these terms.

Specifically, this bill does not define what ''limited presence'' means. Does it mean 50,000 troops or 100,000 troops or 137,000 troops? What is a limited presence? No one knows. This is not a serious bill; it is a political bill.

Third, the bill requires the President to address whether it is necessary for our Armed Forces to carry out missions such as, listen to this, protecting diplomatic facilities and U.S. citizens, whether it is necessary to carry out acts like acting to disrupt or eliminate al Qaeda, or if it is necessary to carry out acts including training and equipping members of Iraqi security forces. Let me ask my friends on the other side of the aisle, for goodness sake, what else would we do there?

It is illogical to ask whether these missions are necessary and only proves once again that this bill is a political tool and not an alternative plan.

There are also two other points that my colleagues should consider. First, the situation in Iraq is not conducive to a force reduction. As an example of why this is true, the British have indicated their intent to draw down and have pulled back to the Basra airport. And as a result, Basra is now in the center of a power struggle between Shiite elements and tribal leaders over control of oil and political power. Local governance control has fractured along militia lines because of a British redeployment like the ones we are talking about in this bill.

Second, we need to remind ourselves of what happened in Beirut and Afghanistan when forces precipitously withdrew there. In October 1983, our Marine barracks in Beirut was bombed by Hezbollah with support from Iran. We withdrew our Marines in February 1984, and by that April, the remainder of the peacekeeping force had followed. That civil war continued until 1990 and Hezbollah emerged as a much stronger force, which to this day threatens the West. We should ask ourselves: Could the U.S. have prevented the rise of Hezbollah and the influence of Tehran

had we not had a precipitous withdrawal like the one provided for in this bill?

Second, in the 1980s, the Afghan resistance built momentum by recruiting Muslim fighters to wage jihad against the Soviets. The Soviet withdrawal of 1989 was followed by a civil war and the collapse of the government. The Taliban rose in 1993 and gained control of Afghanistan.

In 1996, bin-Laden moved to Afghanistan where he forged an alliance between al-Qaeda and the Taliban. What followed were al-Qaeda attacks on the World Trade Center, Khobar Towers, the embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, the USS *Cole*, and then September 11th. My colleagues, ask yourself this: "Could the U.S. have prevented the rise of al-Qaeda by responding to these threats?"

I want to urge my colleagues to keep in mind that the world is watching how the United States handles this tough challenge in Iraq. If we concede defeat and retreat, we will send a strong message of weakness and inability to remain committed to our allies and to our enemies.

Tom Friedman noted in the New York Times this week that our withdrawal will mean "more ethnic, religious and tribal killings across Iraq," adding, "it will be one of the most morally ugly scenes you can imagine, no less than Darfur." The Post today also stated that a withdrawal will result in a "full-blown civil war, conflicts spreading beyond Iraq's borders, or genocide." Picture the Iraqis who have helped us, picture them watch as we prepare to leave and picture them clinging to our vehicles in fear of their very lives as we start down the road from Baghdad.

I believe this reckless abandonment of the mission in Iraq would send a clear message to the Iraqi people, our allies, and potential partners around the world that Americans are weak and cannot be trusted. In this world of transnational terrorism and proliferation we can not afford to stand alone.

It is critical that we give General Petraeus the months we gave him to implement his strategy, and I urge my colleagues to vote against this dangerous bill. In this case national security should trump national politics.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair reminds all Members to direct their remarks to the Chair, and not to others in the second person.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 1 minute to an energetic new Member, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HARE).

Mr. HARE. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of the Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act.

On January 10, President Bush announced an increase of more than 20,000 troops in Iraq. Six months later, it is clear that the President's surge strategy has yielded no positive results, and Iraq continues to remain a battleground for sectarian violence and a hotbed for terrorist activity.

But in spite of the realities on the ground, the President seems intent on further digging in his heels on a failed policy that has placed targets on the backs of our troops as they attempt to referee a civil war. In the 6 months that I have served in Congress, the 17th Congressional District of Illinois has mourned the lives of six brave soldiers. In the absence of any visible progress, we can no longer stand by as more of our troops come home in body bags.

Mr. Speaker, President Bush started this war without a plan to win the peace. For the sake of our troops, our national security and our credibility around the world, this Congress must do what this President refuses to do in order to return stability to Iraq. I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I would like to yield 2 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Texas (Mr. THORNBERRY).

Mr. THORNBERRY. Mr. Speaker, as I read this resolution, I can't help but think ''there they go again.''

With approval ratings of Congress near record lows, the majority leadership searches the polls for any issue they can use to political advantage. Unfortunately, their attempt to improve their standing comes at the expense of troops on the ground and our country's security.

Of course the American people are concerned about the course of events in Iraq. Of course they mourn each loss. Of course they want our troops to come home as soon as possible. Of course they do, because we all do.

But responsible leadership does not permit pandering to polls and understandable emotions without facing up to the real consequences of the vote. And by the way, putting the word ''responsible'' in the title of a bill does not make it so. It is an understandable, though I believe misguided, position to require an immediate withdrawal of forces from Iraq. This resolution, though, is an attempt to play politics with the issue and avoid responsibility for the consequences that come from its aftermath.

Requiring withdrawal on a congressionally mandated timetable abandons those who have worked with us, invites chaos and more death in Iraq and increases the risk to our security here at home. No one should be able to stick his or her head in the sand and ignore those consequences.

Mr. Speaker, I am concerned that what goes on in this Chamber with resolutions like this is encouraging to our adversaries and makes the job of our troops on the ground even harder than it needs to be. How can it possibly be responsible to declare failure when all of our troops have only been in Iraq for just about exactly 1 month today. This struggle and the broader war against radical Islamist terrorists will require the best of us, and that requires doing our constitutional duty. This resolution is far from the best we can do.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, I yield to a very thoughtful colleague, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. PRICE), 2 minutes.

Mr. PRICE of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 2956, which would compel a responsible exit of U.S. troops from Iraq.

I voted against giving the President the authority to go to war in Iraq. Two years ago, BRAD MILLER and I introduced legislation to terminate the authorization and to require of the President a comprehensive exit strategy. The President has responded to calls for change by stubbornly adhering to a failed strategy that has cost our Nation dearly in blood, treasure and moral authority. He has rejected Congress's constitutional role in determining policy, and he has ignored the will of the American people. This obstinate, irresponsible, destructive course must not continue.

Now, the President has put great stock in the recent surge in U.S. forces, but the surge seems mainly to have shifted the locus of the fighting. The intent was to create space for Iraq's political leaders to make the hard choices that will lead their country forward, but those hard choices are not being made. We can no longer leave our foreign policy at the mercy of sectarian and political forces we cannot control.

A mission of simply biding time, at great cost in blood and treasure, is not one that we can or should support. We must begin to bring our troops home.

Yet, as I and many others have repeatedly argued, it not only matters that we leave Iraq, but it also matters greatly how we leave. We cannot afford the same mistakes that the Bush administration made in entering Iraq, without a plan for protecting troops, for managing consequences or for giving the Iraqi people every possible chance to succeed.

Therefore, the bill before us would provide the discipline of a timeline to the Bush administration for beginning and completing the termination of combat operations and the redeployment of our troops. It would also compel the development of a comprehensive strategy for managing the redeployment and addressing the challenges that Iraq will continue to present after our troops are gone.

Mr. Speaker, the continued presence of 160,000 American troops in Iraq is not sustainable and does not serve our national interest. It is time not merely to urge but to require a change of course. This legislation does just that, and I urge its passage.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 1 minute to the gentlewoman from Pennsylvania (Ms. SCHWARTZ).

Ms. SCHWARTZ. Mr. Speaker, today President Bush, as required by Congress, has reported on progress made by the Iraqi Government on political and military benchmarks. He reported that the Iraqis have not accomplished any of these goals.

It is time, in fact past time, for the Iraqis to take control of their own future. It is time for the Iraqis to move forward, resolve their internal conflicts and begin the process of national reconciliation.

More than 3,600 Americans have paid the ultimate sacrifice to bring freedom

and democracy to Iraq. Our military has performed exceptionally; for that and for their sacrifices, our Nation will be internally grateful.

But without progress by the Iraqis themselves, there is little more that our military can do. And despite the stubbornness of our President to stay the course, it is time for us to bring our troops home.

I am proud to be with the majority in Congress and across America in supporting this responsible plan to redeploy our troops, set a new course in Iraq, and lead our Nation towards greater security here at home and across the world.

I rise in support of the Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act and I stand in support of a change in strategy for U.S. involvement in Iraq: one that sets a timetable for prompt and safe withdrawal of our armed forces.

For many of us on the House Floor today this is not the first time we have voted for such a change, or demanded a new plan from the President.

In March, we voted to withdraw U.S. forces from Iraq, improve troop readiness, and demand accountability from the administration. The President vetoed our plan.

In May, Congress enacted specific political and military benchmarks for the Iraqi government. By tying the goals to funds for military action in Iraq, we made it clear that progress is a prerequisite for continued assistance by the United States.

Today, President Bush, as required by Congress, reported on progress made by the Iraqi government towards those benchmarks. He reported that the Iraqis have not accomplished any of these goals.

More than 3,600 Americans have paid the ultimate sacrifice to bring freedom and democracy to Iraq. Our military has performed exceptionally. They removed a government hostile to the United States and took responsibility for providing enough stability to enable the Iraqi people to establish their own free and independent government. For that and for their sacrifices, our Nation will be eternally grateful.

Yet, as the war enters its fifth year, sectarian violence and failure of political progress has put our troops in a more and more threatening and dangerous situation. This volatility and the President's surge strategy have increased U.S. and Iraqi casualties and injuries.

It is time —well past time—for the Iraqis to take control of their own future. It is time for the Iraqis to move forward to establish an effective system of government, to resolve their internal conflicts, and to begin the process of national reconciliation. Without these actions by the Iraqis themselves, there is little more our military can do. It is time—well past time—for us to bring them home.

On behalf of the American people, we are seeking to do just that. Today we will vote once again to end our military involvement on the frontlines in Iraq and bring our troops home despite the stubbornness of our President to stay the course.

It is my hope that that Republicans will join us in supporting this responsible plan to redeploy our troops and to press the President for a new course in Iraq. As Democrats, we will lead this country towards a more responsible—more strategic path—to end our military involvement in Iraq. In so doing, we remain committed to protect our nation, our people and our strategic interests at home and around the world.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I would like to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. COLE).

Mr. COLE of Oklahoma. Mr. Speaker, I rise to oppose this bill because it is the wrong debate at the wrong place at the wrong time; and most importantly, it sends the wrong message.

It is the wrong debate because it serves no useful purpose. We know this bill will never become law. If it passes, it will be vetoed, and that veto will be sustained. We are wasting the time and trying the patience of the American people for no useful purpose.

It is the wrong place because it is what happens in Iraq, not here, that will determine the outcome of the current struggle. Our forces and those of the Iraqi Government are in a tough fight. We should reinforce them, not undercut them, and we should encourage the Iraqi Government, not abandon it.

It is the wrong time because it is too early to debate the outcome of the current effort in Iraq. I have great respect for the author of this bill, but it is General Petraeus's report and assessment that should guide our deliberations in this body. He has asked us to wait until September before he offers us an assessment of the progress and prospects of the current effort. Having given him a tough job, we owe it to him to adhere to the timeline he has requested.

It is the wrong message, most importantly, because it strengthens rather than weakens our enemies.

□ 1530

They know they cannot defeat our forces, but they can and they do believe they can outlast this Congress. This debate and this bill will only strengthen them in that belief.

By strengthening our enemies, we undercut the best efforts of our forces, the forces of Iraq and the Iraqi Government. The best way to undo the damage that this bill has already done is to defeat it, and I urge my colleagues to do so.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, might I inquire how much time is left on our side?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from New Jersey has 49½ minutes remaining. The gentleman from California has 29 minutes remaining.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to yield 1 minute at this point to one of our very focused new Members, the gentleman from Connecticut, Mr. CHRIS MURPHY.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

For all that we disagree on here today, we agree on one thing: We all want a stable, independent Iraq. What I can't understand is how anyone can still believe that our continued, open-ended military intervention there will lead to a stable nation. In fact, it's doing the opposite.

The Iraqi Parliament and ministries are in unprecedented disarray. The President's own report to Congress will say that we haven't met any of our political benchmarks there, and an estimated 13,000 Iraqis are dead since the escalation began.

The fact is, as someone much wiser than I said, the Iraqis today are paying wholesale rather than retail for their political decisions. So long as we are the military bodyguard for every major Iraqi political group, so long as we are subsidizing the political decisions of Iraqi political leaders, they will never make the difficult political concessions necessary to create a stable society there.

I support this bill, Mr. Speaker, because not another American soldier should die for a strategy that is unfathomably making Iraq less safe and less stable.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman who started the Iraq Study Group, the gentleman from Virginia, the very distinguished Mr. WOLF.

(Mr. WOLF asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WOLF. Mr. Speaker, I rise against the resolution, and I rise in support of the Iraq Study Group.

Most Americans favor the recommendations of the Iraq Study Group. In fact, most Members of this body also favor the Iraq Study Group, but all would favor its consideration. I have asked the Rules Committee on three different occasions to make the Iraq Study Group recommendations in order, and I have been denied.

Let me say that we ought not blindly follow the White House, nor we ought not blindly follow the Democratic leadership in Congress. The American people have a very low opinion of this institution, as Mr. THORNBERRY just said, because all they see us doing is attacking, dividing, and using political rhetoric.

The American people want us to come together. A majority of your side have said they support the Iraq Study Group. A majority of my side have said they support the Iraq Study Group. Lee Hamilton, Jim Baker, Leon Panetta, and Ed Meese have done an outstanding job. They have 41 experts of all political views that have come together.

This body ought to be voting and debating the Iraq Study Group and not a resolution that is preordained that it will be vetoed.

Let's come together. Let's bring it up for a vote, but to blindly follow the White House or to blindly follow the Democratic leadership that will not give this up, we will continue to have the lowest opinion poll this Congress has ever had. The American people deserve better. The men and women who are serving in Iraq and Afghanistan deserve better, and their families deserve better.

The 79 recommendations of the Iraq Study Group provide a comprehensive blueprint for dealing with the war in Iraq. Its conclusions were the result of consensus, and most people favor implementing the bipartisan panel's recommendations.

Members of the administration, albeit anonymously, have been quoted as saying the ISG is the way to go. Members of the military have looked favorably on the report. And so have both sides of the aisle here in Congress.

H.R. 2574, which would codify the recommendations of the report, and whose lead sponsor is a Democrat, has 58 cosponsors. 34 Republicans are on the bill; and there are 24 Democrats.

Look who served on the panel: Jim Baker, Lee Hamilton, Lawrence Eagleburger, Vernon Jordan, Ed Meese, Leon Panetta, Sandra Day O'Connor, Chuck Robb, Alan Simpson and Bill Perry. Secretary Gates served until being appointed Secretary of Defense.

The panel took nearly 9 months to come up with its 79 recommendations—which were all agreed to unanimously.

The ISG met with military officers, regional experts, academics, journalists and high-level government officials from America and abroad.

Congress should have opportunity to debate—and discuss—the merits of the Iraq Study group's recommendations.

It is not adequate to just blindly follow the whims of the White House or the Democrat Leadership in Congres. We need to be working together toward building a consensus on this issue rather trying to score political points.

The American people expect more. The men and women serving in uniform deserve more. So do their families.

They want to see us the Congress, the administration and the nation working together; not fighting each other.

Implementing the 79 recommendations of the Iraq Study Group is the one thing we can do that could have an impact.

I have tried three times now to get this Congress to adopt the recommendations of the ISG. Each time my efforts have been rebuffed by the Rules Committee. If we had acted back in January, we wouldn't be here today. I realize the war has created a bitter divide in our country. The ISG allows us to come together.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to my friend and colleague from Washington (Mr. INSLEE).

(Mr. INSLEE asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. INSLEE. Mr. Speaker, the best way to stop a disastrous war would have been not to have started it, but the American people know that, it having been started, we did have a moral obligation to the Iraqi people to give them a reasonable chance to form a government. But after 4 years, after 3,600 lives, after $450 billion of American money sunk into the sands of Iraq, that moral obligation has been fulfilled in spades.

Now we have a moral obligation to our sons, a moral obligation to our daughters, a moral obligation to our husbands and wives. The moral obligation to Iraq has been completed. The moral obligation to our families now needs to be honored, and it could only be honored by passage of this resolution.

Now, people have said that we can't just leave; we need a way forward. There is only one way forward to security, to reduce the threats from the Mideast, and that is to break our addiction to oil from that region of the world.

Take one-half of the $80 billion and put it in energy efficiency, we'll give you security. Pass this resolution.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased at this time to yield 1 minute to the chairwoman of the Small Business Committee, the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. VELÁZQUEZ).

(Ms. VELÁZQUEZ asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 2956. We must support and protect our troops, and the best way to do that is to bring them home.

The American people want the troops out of harm's way. The White House has not met its own benchmarks, and with this resolution, the Iraqi leaders, for once, will know that we mean business.

Mr. Speaker, the pain and suffering felt because of this war is unconscionable. New York has lost over a 150 brave young souls; yet, for this President, there's no ending to this war.

There is a smarter way. Under H.R. 2956, our troops start to come home in 120 days. Over 70 percent of Americans want us out of Iraq. Democracy is about elected officials listening to the people. Democracy is what we are trying to teach Iraqis, how to run their own democracy. By voting to bring our troops home, we can show them.

The American people want this war to be over. Put your faith and trust in them. Choose democracy. Choose a way forward. Vote for this resolution.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased at this time to yield 1 minute to a leader on our foreign policy issues, the gentleman from California (Mr. SCHIFF).

(Mr. SCHIFF asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SCHIFF. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, when the President announced in January that he intended to escalate the number of American troops in Iraq, he sought to betray the increase in American combat forces as a necessary precondition for Iraq's government to make the political compromises necessary to prevent Iraq's civil war from spiraling completely out of control. In that speech, the President pledged to hold the Iraqi leadership accountable and to demand progress in two main areas: political reconciliation and security.

Now, more than 6 months later, it's unfortunate but also undeniable that little sustainable progress has been made on either front. Even as we speak, the administration is downplaying the significance of an interim report on the effect of the surge in Iraq.

On the security front, the heroism and sacrifices of American forces has caused a drop in sectarian killings, leading to an overall drop in the number of Iraqi deaths, but the reduction of Iraqi casualties has come with a horrific increase in the loss of our own troops. More than 600 Americans have been killed since January.

Moreover, as American troops leave cities that are quieted with their own blood, there is every indication that Iraqi troops will not be able to sustain the calm. If the past is any indicator, insurgents and militias are merely waiting for us to exhaust ourselves and move on before returning, and Iraqi security forces will be powerless to stop them.

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On reconciliation, the Iraqi Government has failed to meet any of the political benchmarks endorsed by the President in January and which this Congress mandated earlier this spring. These political goals are the best indicator of the prospects for reconciliation in Iraq and, tragically, all signs indicate that political reconciliation has been non-existent.

The Iraqi Parliament has yet to begin consideration of the oil law or an associated revenue-sharing law. Given the disparate geographical distribution of Iraq's oil reserves, these laws are essential if Iraq is to have any hope of remaining a united country.

More alarming, is the lack of progress in healing the Sunni-Shiite rift. Of greatest importance, is the need to reverse some of the more draconian edicts of the postwar de-Baathification orders promulgated by former Coalition Provisional Authority chief Paul Bremer. These decrees removed any incentive for Sunnis to participate in creating a better future for Iraq. Other laws—to disarm militias and to grant amnesty—are still being formulated, and most observers believe that the prospect of disarming militias is so remote that it will not be possible in the foreseeable future.

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on before returning—and Iraqi security forces will be powerless to stop them.

There has been one very positive development—in al Anbar province, Sunni tribal leaders have decided that al Qaeda's indiscriminate killing makes them a bigger problem than we are, and they have taken up arms against our common foe. This alliance of American forces and former insurgents is desirable and should be encouraged elsewhere. But, like most marriages of convenience, it is not sustainable and cannot form the bedrock of a secure Iraq or reconciliation among Iraqi sects.

For almost two years, I have been calling for a change in our mission in Iraq—from policing a civil war to training, containment and counter-terrorism. This necessitates a responsible redeployment of our combat forces from Iraq, and I believe that this bill does an excellent job of providing a framework for that redeployment, while still giving our armed forces the flexibility that they need to respond to contingencies.

Iraq's future must be decided by the Iraqi people and that solution must come from political reconciliation. Every day that we maintain our forces in the crossfire between warring sects is another opportunity for hatreds to harden and radicals to consolidate their grip on Iraq's ethnic and sectarian communities. We should change our mission now, and begin the withdrawal of our combat forces.

In planning for the inevitable withdrawal, we must recognize that a poorly executed departure could result in an escalation of civil war violence as Iraqi sects compete for power. As we draw down our forces, we must make every effort to prevent a magnification of this catastrophic violence. In particular, we must not compound the error of the lack of pre-invasion planning, with an equally tragic failure to adequately anticipate the post-occupation environment.

Mr. Speaker, it is long past time to begin to end the war in Iraq. I support this bill and urge its passage by the House today.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, at this time I'm pleased to yield 1 minute to a former member of our Armed Services Committee, my friend and colleague from Rhode Island (Mr. LANGEVIN).

(Mr. LANGEVIN asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LANGEVIN. Mr. Speaker, over the recess I had the opportunity to have several public hearings back home, and Iraq was one on everyone's mind. The overwhelming consensus was that we need a new strategy in Iraq, a view shared by national security experts and illustrated by continued violence in the region. Today, we can chart a new path so that we can finally bring our troops home.

Americans know the Bush strategy isn't working, and today's Iraq status report confirms the lack of progress. The Iraqi Government has failed to promote political reconciliation, and our military is paying the price. Our troops have done a superb job, but they were not sent to Iraq to referee a civil war.

Today's bill requires our military to start redeploying out of Iraq within 120 days, to be completed by April 1, 2008. We will not abandon Iraq, but we must implement a new strategy based on political, economic and diplomatic initiatives.

I want to thank Chairman SKELTON for his leadership on this measure, and I urge all my colleagues to support it.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, at this time I'm pleased to yield 1 minute to a member of the Appropriations Committee, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. MORAN).

Mr. MORAN of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I thank my good friend from New Jersey.

I rise in support of this bill. I can't believe the argument in opposition to this bill, that we should continue to stay the course, because this is the policy that has led us in the wrong direction for four straight years. This has been the worst foreign policy fiasco in American history.

Now we're being told that we're there to fight al Qaeda. There were no al Qaeda in Iraq when we went into Iraq. Saddam had nothing to do with 9/11. Now there are about 5,000 there out of a population of 26 million.

We have trained hundreds of thousands of Iraqis. Many of them we've given them more training than we've given our own troops.

This policy is not worthy of the sacrifice of our troops and their military families. It's leading us down a dead-end street. It's time that it was changed.

Mr. Speaker, we are told that we need to train the Iraqis more. All we are doing is equipping and training them in order to kill each other in a civil war that I'm afraid is going to be inevitable.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, at this time I'd like to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. FRANKS), a distinguished member of the Armed Services Committee.

Mr. FRANKS of Arizona. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman.

Mr. Speaker, just today, while debating this new Iraq withdrawal bill, reports continue to surface that al Qaeda is now restructuring its power.

Like several other recent actions on the part of Democrats recently, this bill communicates to jihadist enemies that we are weakening and confirms their belief that they have a critical advantage over free people in the world because their will is far stronger than ours and they need only to persevere to break our resolve.

Osama bin Laden himself has stated, ''The whole world is watching this war and the two adversaries. It's either victory and glory, or misery and humiliation.''

Mr. Speaker, if Democrats continue to insist that the war in Iraq has nothing to do with the war on terrorism, then I wish they would explain that to the terrorists because they still don't understand, and they are continuing to be fundamentally committed to the destruction of the Western world and to killing us wherever they find us.

Mr. Speaker, the premise behind this bill is that we can have peace tomorrow so long as we are willing to surrender today. Unfortunately, with jihadist terrorism, just the opposite is true. If we surrender to terrorism today, it will only bring greater horror and suffering to all of humanity tomorrow.

So vital questions arise to those who would continue to demand that we surrender Iraq to terrorists. Are they also willing to allow the citizens and families of this Nation to face jihad and what may become a nuclear jihad here at home? And what will we tell our children when that day comes?

Mr. Speaker, defeating radical jihad in Iraq and throughout the world will require the support, perseverance, patience, wisdom and prayers of the American people. But for the sake of those people and for our children, for our future generation and for people across the world who still hope for freedom, I pray that the Members of this body would heed that warning echoing down through history.

There is no substitute for victory.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to my friend and colleague, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER).

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the gentleman's courtesy.

It's not too early. It's too late, too late because the President's party has enabled these disastrous policies. And listening to some on the other side of the aisle, there are people still disconnected from reality.

But each day their congressional support is slowly crumbling as evidence mounts of the costs of failure. It's not just 10 billions of dollars a month. It's more lives lost and thousands of hopes and dreams shattered.

□ 1545

Even those of us who opposed this from the beginning understand that 300,000 American soldiers and contractors cannot leave overnight. But that's no excuse not to start now, as rapidly and as responsibly as possible, to get our people out of crossfire of what is now a religious civil war. Our soldiers have done all that they can do and can be expected of them.

I call on the doubters to join us in supporting the strongest most direct measure possible, not just to send the President a message, but rein him in and bring our soldiers home from this nightmare.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to my friend and colleague, the gentlelady from Oregon (Ms. HOOLEY).

Ms. HOOLEY. I thank my colleague.

Mr. Speaker, today is not cause for celebration, nor is it a time for high rhetoric. Instead, today is a moment of conscience. Hundreds of billions of dollars have been spent, 3,600 of our best and brightest have been called upon to sacrifice in the unforgiving sands of Iraq.

When in a hole, it is best to stop digging. We must make plans to protect those we can best protect, to institute a rational response capability

within the region. But first we must make immediate plans to disengage ourselves from Iraq.

I urge my colleagues to find consensus on this issue. We owe it to the brave men and women that have sacrificed and will continue to sacrifice until we find and implement resolution.

Once we have disengaged ourselves from the Iraqi civil war, maybe, with patience, dialogue and an open ear, we may find new relationships within the Middle East to help our partners secure the peace we have thus far found so elusive.

Let us renew our commitment to finding a solution for Middle East conflict. It is time we used our heads and hearts rather than fists and force.

I urge my colleagues to join me in voting once again for changing course in Iraq.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 1 minute to our thoughtful friend and colleague from the State of Georgia (Mr. SCOTT).

Mr. SCOTT of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, let me just very briefly outline exactly what we are after in this bill.

First of all, this is a responsible effort for redeployment so that we can refocus and fight the war on terror. The situation in Iraq is a civil war compounded by civil wars that have been going on ever since Abraham, Hagar, Sarah, Isaac, Ishmael, Esau, Mohammed and his son-in-law, which has broken into the Shi'as and the Sunnis; hundreds of thousands of years, folks.

None of the people from Iraq came to this country and asked, please come over and pump in $500 billion, 3,600 of the lives of your precious sons and daughters to make a democracy for us. That was a decision that was made counter to the authorization in the first place. It was a go against weapons of mass destruction.

It is responsible. It is focused. We need to do it, and I urge passage of this bill.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. SHUSTER).

Mr. SHUSTER. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I spent the Fourth of July recess traveling to Pakistan and to Iraq.

I came away with a couple of observations. First in Pakistan, our allies in the war on terror, the Pakistanis, have great concern about an early withdrawal from Iraq, because they saw first hand, after the defeat of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan, when America left that region, left Afghanistan to uncertainty and chaos, what happened was the rise of the Taliban, an extremist group, that then gave basis to al Qaeda to be able to plan and plot the 9/11 attacks on America.

So the Pakistanis are extremely concerned about an early withdrawal. Our allies around the world are concerned. The word of America is at risk. Our allies are watching what we do here in the United States Congress and what America does.

Second, traveling to Iraq, I came away with some positive reports, not only from our commanders, but listening to the Iraqi general, who is in charge of the national police. He said that the Shia, the Sunni and the Kurds have come together as Iraqis, standing up a national police force that's fighting to throw out the negative elements that are in Iraq today. They are standing shoulder-to-shoulder, the Shia, Sunni and Kurds. Our folks also told us that they need more time to train the police, the security of the Iraqis.

Talking to our soldiers was the most powerful information I came away with. One of the sergeants in our Special Forces told us something very significant. Right about now, he is saddling up, he is getting ready to go out on a dangerous mission in Iraq tonight to either kill al Qaeda to take down a production facility for IEDs. He said to me, he said to the group of us that was there, we cannot leave Iraq prematurely because chaos will ensue, and what we will find is that the terrorists will be in the streets of America.

So listening to that powerful statement from somebody who is putting his life on the line, every single night, that's powerful information. Those are powerful words.

We have to allow this surge, not just to last for 3 weeks, but to go for 3 months. Let it go. Let us vote down this resolution.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 1 minute to the distinguished chairman of the Education and Labor Committee, my friend from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER).

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of Chairman SKELTON's bill to bring American forces home from Iraq and to begin to end this tragic war, a war borne of lies, ignorance and arrogance. The cost of this war has been high to our country, to our economy but, most importantly, to our men and women in uniform, for they have taken all of the sacrifice for our President's decision to take this country to war in Iraq.

Our military responded honorably to the President's decision, but he failed to honor their sense of duty and their courage with a plan that was designed to succeed. His failed policy has cost their families, their communities, and most tragically, it has cost them their limbs and their lives.

The war in Iraq cannot be won, and it cannot be lost. It can only be brought to an end. The President continues to display both sheer arrogance and tragic ignorance as he refuses to change policy. Over and over again, it says the same thing, to stay the same course, to give them more time and that success is just around the corner.

The American people realize that staying the course in Iraq was not a plan, and it is not going to work. I have known, as many of my Democratic colleagues have, that staying the course is not acceptable. We honor our troops when we have the courage to bring them home and end this war.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased at this time to yield 1 minute to my friend and colleague, a Member of the Ways and Means committee from the State of Michigan (Mr. LEVIN).

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. Speaker, one of my colleagues suggested earlier that debating the war as we are today is breaking the will of the American people.

On the contrary, it's the people's will that is breaking down the wall of a tragically mistaken policy. It has become painfully obvious that the White House is incapable of changing course in Iraq.

The Bush administration's talking points about the situation change from week to week, but the fundamental strategy remains the same. The President has determined our troops will remain in Iraq no matter what. The reality is that the government of Iraq is not meeting the benchmark.

Six months into the surge, there is no indication that the Iraqis are coming together to make the political decisions necessary to end the sectarian violence that's tearing the country apart. They are unlikely to do so as long as the U.S. military commitment remains open-ended.

We need to change course. Support this bill.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, may I inquire as to how much time is left on our side?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from New Jersey has 38½ minutes remaining.

The gentleman from California has 23 minutes remaining.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 1 minute to one of our thoughtful new Members from Florida (Mr. MAHONEY).

Mr. MAHONEY of Florida. I thank the gentleman.

Mr. Speaker, I am rising today in support of the Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act. The time has come to stop this senseless policy of using our brave men and women in uniform as cops policing a religious civil war, and it's time for our country to rededicate ourselves to winning the war on terror.

The data is in. The facts are irrefutable in and the conclusion clearly demonstrates that the President's continued resolve to engage in nation building in Iraq has made America weaker and has put our Nation in greater peril from terrorist attack. It is time that we stop asking our brave sons and daughters to give the ultimate sacrifice in support of the President's failed policies.

It is time for the President to listen to his own advisors and the American people. It is time for the President to admit mistakes he has made and for him to show leadership by changing direction. It is time for the President to

honor our service men and women by rebuilding our military and by using our finest fighting force the world has ever known to bring Osama bin Laden to justice, to search out and destroy terrorists and to punish the nations that support terror.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 1 minute to the distinguished Member of the Ways and Means committee, our friend from Massachusetts (Mr. NEAL).

Mr. NEAL of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, our men and women in the military have done everything that has been asked of them, and it's time for a new direction.

The reason we're here is because the Republican party never asked a question of the administration for all those years, not one question. They forfeited their oversight responsibilities.

Remember the briefings in the well of this House; we know where the weapons of mass destruction are; according to the Secretary of Defense, they are in south Baghdad; we were going to be welcomed as liberators; the insurgency, as the Vice President stated it, is in its last throws; and finally, mission accomplished? Now we hear: But just give us more time. Stay the course.

If we had asked some questions here along the way, and not been subservient to the White House, we wouldn't find ourselves where we are today, funeral upon funeral, 26,000 Americans wounded. Yet we are told by the White House, just give us more time for this policy to take root.

How much more time? Vote for this resolution.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to Mr. PEARCE, the gentleman from New Mexico.

Mr. PEARCE. I thank the gentleman from California for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, we are told today that it's time to refocus on the war on terror. Yet as I read this bill, and I would encourage each one of you to go online and read H.R. 2956, I see no refocus on the war on terror.

I see nothing in H.R. 2956 which describes the threat from radical jihad. I see no plan.

We are told that we need to communicate with the White House, that we need to send a bold message to the President. I am sorry, he's right down the street. It's the people who are causing terror, worldwide terror, that the communication needs to be sent to.

Now, I can't tell you exactly what our troops are feeling as we debate these measures.

I can tell you that I was in Vietnam flying missions in Vietnam at the time that Jane Fonda gave aid and comfort to our enemy, and a time that this Congress was withdrawing support from that war. And I can tell you what soldiers at that time felt. They felt dismay. They felt betrayal. They felt like we had been led down a path.

If this were really an attempt by our majority party to deal with the situation that they are concerned about, it should have an immediate withdrawal date. But it lacks that because it's a political tool rather than an attempt to refocus on the war on terror.

I can tell you that it does not ask key questions, key questions like, how will unilateral withdrawal prevent al Qaeda, Hezbollah and other terrorist operatives already in Iraq from establishing robust training facilities from which to plan and execute additional strikes against the United States?

It fails to answer the question that both Israel and Jordan have asked when they said that unilateral withdrawal, much like the Democrats' plan, would have a devastating consequence on their countries and the region as a whole.

What impact will our unilateral withdrawal from Iraq have on the safety of regional allies, such as Israel, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait? Those questions go unasked and unaddressed in H.R. 2956, because this is not a plan to refocus the war on terror. This is a plan to withdraw and hope that we can retreat home without anyone following us.

It just won't happen that way. The terrorists will come with us as we retreat.

I urge defeat of H.R. 2956.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to our friend and colleague, the hard-working new Member from Tennessee (Mr. COHEN).

□ 1600

Mr. COHEN. Mr. Speaker, back in February when this Congress started the 110th, there was a proposal up here, a resolution that passed with mostly Democrat support, very few Republicans, to say we supported the troops but we opposed the surge or the escalation. Since that time, we have put 20,000 or 30,000 more troops into Iraq, and since that time we have had some of the deadliest months that we have incurred in this failed war in the Middle East.

As time has gone on, we have seen Senators VOINOVICH; LAMAR ALEXANDER from my home State; LUGAR; and others on the Republican side in the Senate come forth and say we need a change of direction. The handwriting has been on the wall in both cloakrooms. The handwriter got to the Democratic cloakroom a lot sooner than apparently the handwriter got to the Republican cloakroom. Either that, or the optometrist hasn't made it over to the other side. But the handwriting is on the wall, and in the interim there are American men and women dying needlessly. Over 3,600 have died; many, many, many, many more casualties, and the cost to this country will be great.

While I was home during the home workweek, I saw a lady who told me her son has been at Desert Storm. He was still in the military. He had been in Iraq once before. And she told me he told her, Mother, I am proud to fight for my country. I have done it twice. But there is no purpose over there, there is no reason to be over there. We need to come home. I have heard it over and over and over again from the mothers of the soldiers who come home with testimony to our failed foreign policy.

How many, how many, how many more must die? How many more limbs must be lost before the handwriting on the wall in the Republican cloakroom is read? I ask you to look in your own hearts. Think of the soldiers as your children, they are your constituents, and help redeploy them. We are not saying in this proposal that we come home entirely. We keep troops for certain causes.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. All Members are reminded to direct their remarks to the Chair and not to others in the second person.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, I yield to my friend and colleague, the gentleman from California, Mr. MIKE THOMPSON, 1 minute.

Mr. THOMPSON of California. Mr. Speaker and Members, our strategy in Iraq isn't working. It wasn't working 3 years ago, and it won't be working another year from now. This isn't about defeat; it is about reality.

Our troops have done a fantastic job. But to risk more lives, more wounded, and to spend more than the half trillion dollars we have already spent far exceeds any gain we can expect.

The best thing to do is to get our troops out, and get them out immediately, and to make the Iraqis take control of their country. But, today, I will vote for this bill which is a realistic shift in strategy that every Member should be able to support.

Our focus should be on protecting our home front, stabilizing Afghanistan, and stamping out terrorism across the globe. And we need to start looking ahead by developing a containment plan to keep Iraq's civil war from spilling over into other countries throughout the region. Mr. Speaker, that is the only way to achieve victory.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the distinguished gentlelady from Virginia (Mrs. DRAKE).

Mrs. DRAKE. A March 2007 Los Angeles Times editorial posed the question: ''Do we really need a General Pelosi? Too many lives are at stake to allow Members of Congress to play the role of Eisenhower or Lincoln.''

How unfortunate that less than a month after the fifth and final brigade of this surge effort has arrived in Iraq we sit here once again prepared to put bad politics in front of sound policy and undercut that mission, putting the lives of our troops, our coalition partners, and millions of Iraqis at risk.

Once again, the leadership of this institution wants to play general, so it chooses to circumvent the committee process to rush a hastily written piece of legislation to the House floor, one that has no chance of becoming law.

And so the question that I and many Americans have is: Why?

You can find the answer in today's Washington Times. According to this body's majority leader, we are here because ''if we don't do anything, these groups,'' meaning MoveOn and affiliates, ''will feel like we haven't done anything.''

So that's it. We are here to appease MoveOn.org. Where is the policy? Where is the plan? Are we to believe that this bill will bring an end to violence in Iraq? Are we to believe that our withdrawal will make our Nation or the world any safer? Thus, politics replaces policy. We are a Nation at war against Islamic terrorists who have no intention of giving up the fight. We must defend this Nation. We cannot afford to play politics. This legislation carries no plan for securing Iraq or the Middle East, only politics.

Mr. Speaker, we have authorized our military to execute this surge and to report to us in September on its status. Why should we cut the rug out from under them now? Our troops will not give up on us; let's not give up on them. I urge rejection of this resolution.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to yield to one of the leaders of our 30-something younger members, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MEEK), 3 minutes.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my good friend from the Garden State.

It is interesting, Mr. Speaker, and I will point to this L.A. Times editorial since now the L.A. Times is an authority on this issue. The newspaper said it reluctantly endorsed the U.S. troop surge when it began. But at the bottom it says: ''We feel that the time has come now for us to leave Iraq.'' That is the L.A. Times.

I also want to point out another thing as we talk about this redeployment, a responsible redeployment, the act that is up before the House right now that we are considering. I just want to make sure the Members of the House know exactly what they are doing, because when they get back home in their districts and they start talking to the heroes and sheroes that have been deployed two to three times and talk to Americans about why they can't meet the needs that they have to meet here domestically, I want them to reflect on this:

I want them to look at the fact that you have $120 billion a year that we are spending in Iraq; per month, $10 billion; per week, $2.3 billion; per day, $329 million; per hour, $13 million since we have been here on the floor, Mr. Speaker; per minute, which I only have two, $228,000. And you have to look at per second, as I take a breath, $3,816.

Also, I want to point out to the Members here, Mr. Speaker, the last time we passed a measure on behalf of the men and women in harm's way and to send the message to the Iraqi Government, they can go on vacation and they don't meet and they don't do the things that we have put forth as benchmarks that they have to meet in a bipartisan way, then why should we reward bad behavior?

And I have this picture here, Mr. Speaker, of when the President called a lot of the Members of the minority here in this House down to the White House and they had a meeting and the President came out, mikes and everything, not one Democrat here, saying that we stand with the President, this is what the minority president said: ''We stand with the President in not overriding his veto.''

I want to know, Mr. Speaker, how many times the Members of the minority party are going to go down to the White House and stand on the schoolhouse door of allowing us to move in a new direction. The American people are way ahead of us on this issue.

I am so happy that Chairman SKELTON has brought this to the House floor. I am hoping that we have a bipartisan vote on it. I am encouraging every Member of the House, and I do mean every Member of the House, even my good friends on the other side of the aisle, to vote for a commonsense new direction. And I think that is very, very important as we look at this responsible redeployment act.

Once again, it takes courage to be a Member of the House. It takes also leadership to be a Member of the House. And some of us have to go see the wizard and pick up both of those values that we all hold and that we should hold. So I encourage you to cast an affirmative vote on the Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield to Dr. GINGREY, the gentleman from Georgia, 3 minutes.

Mr. GINGREY. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the ranking member for yielding. He would make a great Commander in Chief.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to salute my close friend and chairman of the Armed Services Committee, Chairman IKE SKELTON. I hold him in the highest regard and I admire him dearly, though I must oppose his bill and encourage my colleagues to do the same.

Mr. Speaker, let me be very clear. This bill does not seek to clarify our objectives or a path to victory. It does not offer an alternative to the current plan being implemented by General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker.

Nowhere to be found are any new ideas or solutions or any talk of curbing violence or compelling political reconciliation. Why? Because there is no pressure on the Democrats to put forth any meaningful ideas. They know that this bill is dead on arrival. The President has vowed to veto it, and rightly so. This is a defeatist measure that serves only to placate the Democrats' liberal base.

Mr. Speaker, a few things about this plan immediately jump out to me. According to this legislation, a date certain withdrawal is to commence 120 days after the enactment of this bill. So why then does the bill wait another 2 months before asking the President to formulate a strategy? It is like asking a quarterback to throw Brother Ben passes until the offensive coordinator can come up with a game plan.

Essentially, this bill says that after our troops have packed their bags and have begun to come home, or maybe to deploy to Okinawa per the Murtha plan, then we will receive this master plan detailing how to provide for the security interests in Iraq.

As a physician, that is akin to calling a patient in for surgery before you have done the exam, yanking somebody's heart out before you have inspected the coronaries. In short, Mr. Speaker, it is a recipe for disaster.

Mr. Speaker, the last troop surge deployed just 3 weeks ago, hardly a significant time period for us to be here today judging the plan. However, I do believe Congress should engage in an ongoing, rational dialogue outlining the expectations of both our troops and the Iraqi Government and the security forces. Nobody is here suggesting that we shouldn't. And we will do it in September when we get the Petraeus report based on that report. But, Mr. Speaker, we cannot capitulate to extremist views and sinister plans, which is what this bill would do by sending a message to the terrorists that capitulation begins in 120 days.

I urge my colleagues, oppose this bill.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from South Carolina, who is the chairman of the Budget Committee and also a senior member of the Armed Services Committee, a friend, my colleague, Mr. SPRATT.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this resolution.

I will be frank to say that I think the time lines are too tight, the details are too sketchy; but I recognize this resolution for what it is. It is not a general order or master plan for the redeployment of our troops in Iraq. This is simply a way to frame the debate with the President over how we can most effectively reduce and redeploy the 170,000 troops now on duty in Iraq. We are, after all, in the 5th year of this war.

So far, 3,611 Americans have given their lives, 27,000 have been wounded in action. We have spent $450 billion through May, and continue spending now at a rate of $10 billion a month. Had we the foresight 3 years ago, 4 years ago to see these costs, the War Powers Resolution would not have secured 100 votes in this House.

Opponents of this resolution claim that we are encroaching on the powers of the President as the Commander in Chief. Those who think that should read the resolution and read it carefully.

First of all, it does not call for an immediate withdrawal. It allows 4 months for the reduction in forces to begin. Second, it does not call for withdrawal at all. It calls for a reduction of the

number of troops deployed or transition to a limited mission. Third, it spells out the limited missions. These include force protection, diplomatic protection, pursuit of terrorists, training of Iraqi forces. The resolution, far from interfering, defers to the President, allows the Pentagon to decide just what is the minimum force level for the mission it specifies, provided it justifies its decision.

For the past 3 years, the President has assured us that we would stand down American troops as soon as Iraqi troops stood up. Well, that is essentially what this resolution does; 135 Iraqi battalions have been trained. Many may lack things like logistics to make them freestanding fighting units, but surely this is a capacity we can supply over the next 6 months or even longer through embedded advisers who will remain after April 2008.

This resolution sends the Iraqi troops the message that we are not in their country, Iraq, indefinitely, and that the day is fast approaching when they must take responsibility for the security of their own country.

□ 1615

For the past 2 years the President has told us that benchmarks or milestones have been laid down for the Iraqi government to accomplish. This week we received a progress report on those metrics showing few measurable gains.

So here's our dilemma: Our presence in Iraq, with 170,000 troops, allows the Iraqi government an ability to operate, the freedom of action it would not otherwise enjoy absent our support. But the Iraqi government has exploited that security to avoid doing the very steps that are necessary to its becoming a true government of national reconciliation, which commands the allegiance of all Iraqis.

Yesterday the Deputy Director for Analysis in the Office of National Intelligence told us, ''current political trends are moving the country in a negative direction.'' One way to make Iraqi leaders take the reins of their own government, establish their government, is to announce reduction of our forces in front-line combat troops and their transition to a limited mission and make it clear that our commitment to their country is not open-ended.

Three or 4 months ago, we were told by the administration it was going to undertake a new strategy, a new plan for securing Iraq called a surge, concentrated primarily in Baghdad. We now have the early results from that. We were told we would know in 3 or 4 months. Three or 4 months have passed, and we've only seen casualties increase. There have been some successes, sure, and we're thankful for them. And I hope it succeeds. But we need a new strategy. We do not have one, and this calls for a rethinking of everything. And for these reasons I will vote for this resolution, and I encourage my colleagues to do the same.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3½ minutes to my colleague, my friend, the gentleman from Illinois who is the chairman of the Democratic Caucus, Mr. EMANUEL.

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, this morning the President noted with a report that we were at the starting line; 3,600 American lives, $485 billion spent, $10 billion a month, 5 years into the war. If that is the starting line, then I ask you, what is the cost to get to the finish line? If the President describes today that we are at the starting line, I ask you, what is the cost to get to the finish line after all those lives?

That would not be the words I would choose to tell the American families who've lost their loved ones. That would not be the words I would choose to tell the people who've put up close to a half a trillion dollars that we are at the starting line after 5 years, and our reputation sullied around the world.

Our American men and women in uniform have done brilliantly. Everything we have asked them to do, they have done. They have defeated an army. They have seized a nation, deposed a dictator, taken a castle. There is not one thing we've asked our men and women in uniform and their leadership to do. The only thing they've asked is that their civilian leadership do what they have done, and they were let down. They have won the war, and this administration has failed in the occupation.

Now, President Kennedy once said, ''to govern is to choose; choices are between bad and worse.'' And my colleagues on the other side are not all wrong. They fear that if we leave precipitously, there could be real violence, worse than we're seeing; not totally wrong.

Those of us have said, after 4 or 5 years of more money, more troops, more time and more of the same, at a certain point, you have to understand that there are costs to that because today we see in the report that, in fact, al Qaeda is reconfiguring and stronger than ever. There are costs to staying, and there are costs to leaving.

So what are the choices we all have to make? They are choices between bad and worse. There are those who want to stay and fight the war in Iraq, and there are those of us who want to fight al Qaeda. This is a road to fighting al Qaeda.

There are those who want to police a civil war between Sunnis and Shia, and those of us who believe in fighting the war on terror. That is the choice. Neither is easy. There are consequences to both, but all of us recognize that.

But after 5 years, 3,600 American lives, $485 billion, you have to ask yourself, are we getting stronger, or are we diminishing our reputation and our power?

As our military's stretched, as we see al Qaeda reconfiguring and stronger than ever before, that is the choice before us. And I do agree; it's not a free choice. But staying blindly, without ever having asked a question, only more money, more time, more troops and more of the same with no other clear policy has consequences to America.

In that sense, as we measure the Iraqi progress, as the President noted today, there are also ways to measure our progress.

We were told the insurgency was in its last throes. Not happening. We were told, at another point, they were placing democracy is the Mideast. Not happening. We were told that we were going to find WMD, weapons of mass destruction. Not happening. At every point that this administration has put a benchmark down for itself, it is not happening.

There are consequences to moving just down this path that has been traveled. Too costly. It is time for a new direction for America and Iraq.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to yield to Mr. MCKEON, the gentleman from California, for a unanimous consent request.

(Mr. MCKEON asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. MCKEON. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong opposition to this resolution.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in opposition to the motion being considered. Yet again, I find myself standing in defense of our military leaders and our honorable men and women in uniform. Today's ill-conceived resolution is another example of partisan maneuvering by the Democrats. I think it is important to remind my colleagues exactly what is being sought by this resolution and the negative effect it will have. While our troops are fighting in Iraq, Democratic leadership is attempting to draw attention from any signs of progress and ignore the sound strategy that we laid out earlier this year. What happened to the promise of a New Way Forward in Iraq?

General Petraeus has honorably taken on this leadership role in this war with the support of Democrats in the other body, and yet, here today the Democrats seek to publicly undermine him. It is shameful. He was given a job to do—to execute the Baghdad Security Plan—and he is doing it alongside our troops. The plan is still underway and today's interim report indicates a reduction in violent attacks in Baghdad. We should be standing with him, with our plan, and allowing for its full implementation. Instead, however, we see today the real Democratic agenda in this resolution: the truth is the Democrats aren't interested in whether or not the security plan will work.

Mr. Speaker, I question whether this resolution would do more harm than good. A precipitous withdrawal of troops would seriously endanger our soldiers and would signal defeat to our enemies around the world.

Mr. Speaker this House speaks loudest when it speaks with purpose, and voting to remove troops before receiving the report in September, that we asked for, is contradictory and bad policy. This bill does not honor the sacrifice and dedication of our troops who have fought to implement the plan we approved.

We should never miss the opportunity in this House to act in the best interest of our foreign

policy and our men and women in harm's way. We should—at every opportunity—reject undermining the faith and dedicated work of our brave men and women in uniform.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage my colleagues to join me in opposing this dangerous resolution. It is the duty of this House and of this Congress and of this Nation to give our men and women the support they need to see this conflict through. We have allocated a timeframe for our new General, and now we must allow our military leaders the opportunity to prevail.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, at this time I'd like to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. CONAWAY).

Mr. CONAWAY. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to say a few words. There's a movie out called ''Groundhog Day'' in which the same thing happens over and over for a particularly long period of time.

We've had this debate once recently. We're having it again today, and I understand the leadership on the other side intends to have these conversations once a week for the next 4 weeks. I don't anticipate that much different information will be said.

I have the profoundest respect for the chairman of the committee and the man whose name is on this resolution, but I'm going to have to oppose it.

Much of what gets said here today, Mr. Speaker, is doublespeak. It's doublespeak to talk about the failure to get benchmark progress on the civilian scene, on the political scene in Iraq, and yet to strip $2 billion out of the State Department's funding request, part of the CR, to strip another $500 million out of the 2008 appropriations request, money that would go to do the nation-building part, the provincial reconstruction team part in Iraq, and then to call it a failure. That's doublespeak in a classic sense.

It's doublespeak, Mr. Speaker, to talk about how wonderful our troops are, and they are. They are magnificent, and even more magnificent are the families who support them and let them do what they do. And then to turn around and say that the implementation of this policy has failed, but somehow they've not failed as a result of that; I think that's doublespeak as well.

It's also doublespeak to say the current policy says we're going to have a report in 60 days from David Petraeus, the right man at the right spot to give us that report, and then vote on a resolution that says 120 days we're going to start getting out, when we'll have the better information in September, in 60 days. That's doublespeak. It's disingenuous, I believe, to do it that way.

The majority has the ability to get out of Iraq today. And all of the talk about failure, all of the talk about the lost lives, all of the talk about the costs, by extending this another 120 days, as they intend to do, leaves additional lives at risk. And somehow to me, that just seems to be at counter purposes of what the conversation is.

I encourage my colleagues to vote this resolution down.

Mr. SKELTON. May I inquire, Mr. Speaker, of the time remaining?

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. POMEROY). The gentleman from Missouri has 23 minutes remaining. The gentleman from California has 14 minutes remaining.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to my friend from California (Mr. BACA).

(Mr. BACA asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BACA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today as a veteran who served in the 101st and 82nd Airborne Division in support of H.R. 2956, the Responsible Redeployment From Iraq Act.

This war is a failure, and it's time to bring back our troops. We can no longer stay the course.

Mr. Speaker, the President's policy has been a complete failure. We have lost too many lives. There are too many wounded who will never have normal lives.

We're proud of our troops and the service they have provided to our country. But our troops are now trapped in the middle of a civil war that we cannot end.

This is something that the Iraqi people must do for themselves. Our military presence in Iraq is not making our country safer. Instead, the war has taken the lives of 3,610 soldiers.

In my district alone, we have lost 13 brave men and women, and when I see their faces and their families that have to deal with these individuals that have lost their lives, we're proud of them, but they've lost their lives, and the families who continue to suffer.

CA–43'S FALLEN SOLDIERS IN IRAQ

RIALTO

Staff Sgt. Jorge A. Molina Bautista: Hometown: Rialto, California, U.S. Age: 37 years old. Died: May 23, 2004 in Operation Iraqi Freedom. Unit: Marines, 1st Light Armored Reconnaisance Battalion, 1st Marine Division, 1st Marine Expeditionary Force, Camp Pendleton, Calif. Incident: Killed by hostile fire in Anbar province.

Spec. Luis D. Santos: Hometown: Rialto, California, U.S. Age: 20 years old. Died: June 8, 2006 in Operation Iraqi Freedom. Unit: Army, 1st Battalion, 68th Armor Regiment, 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Fort Carson, Colo. Incident: Died of injuries sustained when a makeshift bomb exploded near his Humvee during combat operations in Buritz.

Spec. Victor A. Garcia: Hometown: Rialto, California, U.S. Age: 22 years old. Died: July 1, 2007 in Operation Iraqi Freedom. Unit: Army, 1st Battalion, 38th Infantry Regiment, 4th Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division (Stryker Brigade Combat Team), Fort Lewis, Wash. Incident: Killed by enemy small arms fire in Baghdad.

Pfc. William A. Farrar Jr.: Hometown: Redlands, California, U.S. Age: 20 years old. Died: May 11, 2007 in Operation Iraqi Freedom. Unit: Army, 127th Military Police Company, 709th Military Police Battalion, 18th Military Police Brigade, Darmstadt, Germany. Incident: Killed when a makeshift bomb device detonated near his vehicle in Iskandariyah. Son of Rialto Police Captain Tony Farrar.

BLOOMINGTON

Cpl. Joseph A. Blanco: Hometown: Bloomington, California, U.S. Age: 25 years old. Died: April 11, 2006 in Operation Iraqi Freedom. Unit: Army, 7th Squadron, 10th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Fort Hood, Tex. Incident: Died of injuries sustained when a makeshift bomb exploded near his Bradley fighting vehicle and he subsequently came under small arms fire during combat operations in Taji.

FONTANA

Lance Cpl. Fernando S. Tamayo: Hometown: Fontana, California, U.S. Age: 19 years old. Died: December 21, 2006 in Operation Iraqi Freedom. Unit: Marines, 3rd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division, 1st Marine Expeditionary Force, Twentynine Palms, Calif. Incident: Died while conducting combat operations in Anbar Province.

Sgt. Bryan A. Brewster: Hometown: Fontana, California, U.S. Age: 24 years old. Died: May 5, 2006 in Operation Enduring Freedom. Unit: Army, 3rd Battalion, 10th Aviation Regiment, 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry), Fort Drum N.Y. Incident: Killed when his CH–47 Chinook helicopter crashed during combat operations east of Abad, Afghanistan.

SAN BERNARDINO

Cpl. Nicanor Alvarez: Hometown: San Bernardino, California, U.S. Age: 22 years old. Died: August 21, 2004 in Operation Iraqi Freedom. Unit: Marines, 1st Combat Engineer Battalion, 1st Marine Division, 1st Marine Expeditionary Force, Camp Pendleton, Calif. Incident: Killed by enemy action in Anbar province.

Pfc. Alex Oceguera: Hometown: San Bernardino, California, U.S. Age: 19 years old. Died: October 31, 2006 in Operation Enduring Freedom. Unit: Army, 1st Battalion, 32nd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, Fort Drum, N.Y. Incident: Killed when a makeshift bomb detonated near his vehicle in Wygal Valley, Afghanistan.

Cpl. Sean R. Grilley: Hometown: San Bernardino, California, U.S. Age: 24 years old. Died: October 16, 2003 in Operation Iraqi Freedom. Unit: Army, 716th Military Police Battalion, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), Fort Campbell, Ky. Incident: Killed while negotiating with Iraqis congregating near a mosque after curfew in Karbala when the Iraqis opened fire.

Spec. Timothy D. Watkins: Hometown: San Bernardino, California, U.S. Age: 24 years old. Died: October 15, 2005 in Operation Iraqi Freedom. Unit: Army, 2nd Battalion, 69th Armor Regiment, 3rd Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division, Fort Benning, Ga. Incident: Killed when a makeshift bomb exploded near his Bradley fighting vehicle during combat operations in Ar Ramadi.

ONTARIO

Spec. Jose R. Perez: Hometown: Ontario, California, U.S. Age: 21 years old. Died: October 18, 2006 in Operation Iraqi Freedom. Unit: Army, 1st Battalion, 6th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, Baumholder, Germany. Incident: Killed by enemy small arms fire in Ramadi.

Sgt. 1st Class Rudy A. Salcido: Hometown: Ontario, California, U.S. Age: 31 years old. Died: November 9, 2006 in Operation Iraqi Freedom. Unit: Army National Guard, 1114th Transportation Company, Army National Guard, Bakersfield, Calif. Incident: Killed when an improvised explosive device detonated near his convoy vehicle in Baghdad.

As a veteran, I say that this war was wrong because you could not convince me why we were there in the first place. The President sent our troops away without proper training or equipment or proof of weapons of mass destruction.

The President believes that Iraq is making our country safer. This is not true. It has put more of us in greater risk. Our military is stretched too thin. We are at risk of not being prepared for any future emergency.

The Iraq war has cost billions of dollars, $650 billion, $10 billion a month. The money could be used to defend homeland security, for police officers, for highway patrol officers, for fire fighters, for sheriffs, for education, for health care and our seniors.

A change in course in Iraq is overdue. We must bring our troops home now. It's time for a new direction. We must support this resolution.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. WILSON), whose son has served a tour of duty in Iraq.

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Thank you, Congressman HUNTER. Thank you for your leadership on behalf of our troops. And I appreciate that your son, Duncan, Jr., has served in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Mr. Speaker, just today we received President Bush's report to Congress on progress in Iraq. I find it sad for American families that on the same day the House is considering legislation that sets arbitrary deadlines and timelines for retreat, the provisions of H.R. 2956 mandate a hasty troop withdrawal starting within 120 days.

Additionally, the bill states that this withdrawal would be conducted in a safe and orderly way. Logistically, it would be impossible to remove our troops safely from Iraq in this short time line. Such rapid retreat would embolden the enemy, leaving American forces subject to ambushes, rockets and IED attacks.

As a 31-year veteran of the Army National Guard, and as a father of four sons in the military, my oldest an Iraq veteran, I especially understand the threats to our troops. In my seven visits to Iraq and three to Afghanistan, I've been continually inspired by the competence of our military leaders and the dedicated troops.

In today's edition of the Washington Post, the lead editorial makes the case against arbitrary withdrawal. It states, ''The generals who have devised a new strategy believe they are making faithful progress. Before Congress begins managing rotation schedules and ordering withdrawals, it should at least give those generals the months they ask for to see whether their strategy can offer some new hope.''

Additionally, al Qaeda has stated that Iraq is the central front in the global war on terrorism. And I believe to withdraw our troops before their mission is complete would invite future attacks at home. The Washington Post editorial states, ''Advocates of withdrawal would like to believe that Afghanistan is now a central front in the war on terror, but Iraq is not; believing that doesn't make sense.''

In conclusion, God bless our troops. We will never forget September the 11th.

I urge defeat of H.R. 2956.

□ 1630

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to my friend and colleague, a veteran of the war in Iraq and member of the Armed Services Committee, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. PATRICK J. MURPHY).

Mr. PATRICK J. MURPHY of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, for the sixth time, I rise calling for a change of direction in Iraq. For the sixth time, I call on the President to stop sending our brave men and women to referee a religious civil war. For the sixth time I call on this administration to focus our efforts in fighting the central front on the war on terror by killing Osama bin Laden and destroying al Qaeda in Afghanistan.

Mr. Speaker, last week countless folks back in Pennsylvania stopped me and asked, Aren't you frustrated by this President who refuses to listen to Congress and the American people?

I told them, I am frustrated that our President refuses to follow the advice of military experts and the will of the American people. I am frustrated because my fellow paratroopers are still fighting and dying in the 138-degree heat of a Baghdad summer. I told them that I will refuse to stop fighting for the best policy for our troops and our families back here at home.

Mr. Speaker, leaving our troops in the middle of a religious civil war isn't resolute. It's reckless. No question that change is slow, but take heart, America. Change is coming. Congress is not going to stop.

President Bush, the legislative branch of government is back and we are not going to go away. We will change the course in Iraq and fight for a smarter global war on terror.

Some Republicans have questioned the patriotism of my fellow Democrats. Even former soldiers here in the House floor. But those types of Republicans are the exception and not the rule. In my short time in Congress, I have learned that most of my colleagues across the aisle are good, decent, and patriotic Americans. Mr. Speaker, I know how much pressure my friends across the aisle are under from the President, from their party leaders to just stay the course.

But I ask you as a soldier, as a father, and as a colleague to acknowledge what the status quo entails. That means additional warnings, walking to our desks here in the Halls of Congress, holding our breath and hoping we don't get word of another fallen soldier.

Mr. Speaker, I implore my Republican colleagues who know in their heart that we need a change. I implore you to think about how many more of these calls you have to make, how many more calls to wives, to fathers, to mothers we all will be forced to make if we don't take action.

I have heard the other side say 4 more months. This President has had his 4 months. He has had his 4 years and 4 months. In 2004, the President said we are turning the corner. In 2005, the Vice President said the insurgency was in its last throes. In 2006, that was the year in transition. And now in 2007, the President says just be patient.

In the last month alone in Bucks County, we have buried four of our finest sons. Four names have been added to the memorial board outside my office. I, for one, don't want to add any more names.

My Republican colleagues, you have the power today to stop these tragic phone calls, to stop adding faces and names to our memorials. Let's change the direction in Iraq and get back to fighting a smarter war on terror together, not as Democrats and Republicans, but as Americans.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Members are reminded to address their comments to the Chair, not to others in the second person.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1½ minutes to my colleague and friend, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. CORRINE BROWN).

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I stand in strong support of this legislation, H.R. 2956.

I have to remind my colleagues that I am from Florida and it does matter who is the President, and we should never forget the 2000 election because it matters who is the President of the United States.

President Bush intentionally misled the American people by supplying false grounds for going to war, and I personally never supported the war in Iraq.

This war has cost over a half trillion dollars. This war is now costing over $12 billion per month.

I stand with the American people and I wholeheartedly support our troops; yet I cannot support a truly senseless war that has killed 3,600 Americans and left over 26,000 severely wounded.

The soldiers did not vote for this war, but when given a mission, they do the best they can to complete it. The military is doing the job they were sent to do. There was a flaw in the mission from the beginning, and the flaw lies with us.

I want to be clear. The President's checking account has been overdrawn. The Bush administration's manipulation of taxpayer dollars to fund this war is over, and 70 percent of the American people oppose this war. This war needs to come to an immediate end.

I urge my colleagues to vote ''yes'' on the bill. Let's redeploy our men and women.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair must remind all Members that remarks in debate may not engage in personalities toward the President or Vice President.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to our distinguished leader, the

gentleman from Maryland, my friend and colleague (Mr. HOYER).

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman for yielding.

We have no more serious matter to debate than war and peace. I thank the gentleman for his extraordinary leadership and for bringing this bill to the floor.

I must remark that how different I think the debate would be if not one of the facts were changed but one: that if it were Bill Clinton in the Presidency and all the other facts were the same, I ask my friends on the other side of the aisle what would their comments reflect.

I have said it before many times on this House floor and I will say it again today. Every Member of this great body who swears an oath to support and defend the Constitution against all enemies, foreign and domestic, is committed to fighting and defeating terrorism. We must not lose sight in this debate that terrorism is a real threat to our people and to our country. We do not lose sight of that on this side of the aisle. We are committed to defeating terrorists and protecting America. Any suggestion otherwise demeans our discourse and is beneath, frankly, the dignity of the Members of this institution and the American people.

After nearly 4½ years in Iraq, a war that has been, I think, superbly peopled by our men and women in uniform but they have been trying to pursue an incompetently planned policy, this is what our Nation has to show for its efforts:

More than 3,600 brave American servicemen and women have been killed in action. More than 26,000 others have been maimed and injured. The American taxpayer has spent $450 billion on this war, with a pending request by the administration for an additional $147 billion.

And yet the President's policy in Iraq is not succeeding. Just today the administration released the ''assessment report'' on Iraq demanded by this Democratic Congress. The bottom line is the Iraq Government has failed to meet a single one of the security, political, and economic milestones for success. Perhaps most jarring, the administration rates as ''unsatisfactory'' the number of Iraqi security units capable of operating independently. That is over 50 months later.

The report states: ''There has been a slight reduction in units assessed as capable of independent operations since January, 2007.'' In other words, the administration says we are going backwards in terms of the capability of the Iraqi forces.

While the administration and congressional Republicans try to put a positive spin on the so-called ''progress'' in Iraq, other respected voices are not so optimistic. Yesterday, Thomas Fingar, the Deputy Director for Analysis at the National Intelligence Council, told the House Armed Services Committee that there have been ''few appreciable gains'' in Iraqi political progress. Even General David Petraeus, our top commander in Iraq, a gentleman that all of us respect as a military leader, told the New York Times that ''while some measures of violence showed a downward trend, it was too early to suggest that there has been a lasting turnaround in the war.'' That is over 50 months later.

Mr. Speaker, last January in an address to the Nation, President Bush stated: ''America will hold the Iraqi government to the benchmarks it has announced.'' We have not done so. We said we would do that, but we have not done so. Today the President shows no intention of changing course even as the Iraqis fail to meet those benchmarks.

Our fight against terrorism must and will be tough, but it also must be smart. And it is long past time that we recognize the following: The President's stay-the-course strategy is not working. The Iraqis must take responsibility for their own country. This war has severely diminished our military readiness and diverted our attention in the war on terror. If that were not the case, Osama bin Laden would still not be at large and al Qaeda would not be reported as being back at the strength that it had on September 11 of 2001.

After $450 billion and precious blood being spilled by American troops and others, we must change course by voting for this legislation, which calls for a responsible redeployment of American forces in Iraq and a comprehensive plan in U.S. policy in Iraq and the broader region.

Mr. Speaker, we must have a specific strategy for missions our remaining forces would undertake as well as plans to engage Iraq's neighboring states and to locate and eliminate al Qaeda and allied terrorist networks, which seek to destabilize and destroy the United States and other democracies. Jonathan Alter at Newsweek just a week ago referred to this as a ''pull and strike'' strategy. Redeploy so that our forces are able to focus on the terrorists, not on the civil war in which they find themselves embroiled.

Mr. Speaker, the American people and an increasing number of our friends on the other side of the aisle have lost confidence in the President's Iraq strategy because we have yet to see demonstrable, sustainable progress in that effort. Our troops have done everything we have asked them.

I'll tell you that we are so proud of those of you who have served in the Armed Forces of the United States. I was so proud of PATRICK MURPHY's statement that he gave here today, so proud of all of those who have served not only in Iraq but in every theater of conflict to which Americans have responded.

But as Senator DOMENICI told the Baltimore Sun yesterday, one of the senior Members of the United States Senate and a leader in the Republican Party, he said this: ''There is no reason to wait . . . I am trying to tell the President that he must change his ways because there is nothing positive happening.''

□ 1645

That is not a Democratic Member of the Senate speaking, that is a senior Republican leader saying there is no reason to wait.

This bill is on this floor this day because there is no reason to wait. Hopefully this body will overwhelmingly respond to the will and focus of the American people, which are pleading for a change in strategy, a new direction, a policy of success against terrorists, and ensuring the safety of our Nation and its people. Let's change our strategy and demand that the Iraqis step up and be responsible for their country.

Our presence there, General Casey observed, has been undermining their taking responsibility, not enhancing it. Let's be responsibly redeploying our troops. And let's focus our resources and efforts on disrupting and destroying the terrorist networks that threaten our national security. This legislation allows us to accomplish that mission.

I urge my colleagues, for this body, for their constituents, for this country, and for our troops, pass this legislation.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I would like to yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. WHITFIELD).

Mr. WHITFIELD. You know, every Member of this House has great respect for the chairman of the Armed Services Committee from Missouri and the ranking member from California. And like the American people, most Members of this House are torn in different directions on this issue of our involvement in Iraq and what steps we should take. But this resolution says as a requirement that the Secretary of Defense shall commence the reduction of the number of Armed Forces in Iraq no later than 120 days after the enactment of this act.

General Petraeus was confirmed unanimously by the U.S. Senate, and in the supplemental, there was a requirement that, on September 15, General Petraeus would make a report to the Congress on the conditions in Iraq. And I believe that it is premature to come forth with this resolution today. But if it comes back at the end of September, after General Petraeus has made his report, the commanding general in Iraq with the responsibility, I think that all of us have the responsibility to read his report, to make an assessment which would be best for the American people.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I have, and I offer as part of the RECORD, Mr. Speaker, a letter I just received dated July 12 from Lee H. Hamilton from the Woodrow Wilson International Center of Scholars, who is the national president thereof. And I will

read just part of it and not take any more time. But it says, ''Dear Ike, thank you for sharing H.R. 2956 on responsible redeployment from Iraq. The legislation outlines the right change in mission for U.S. forces in Iraq, and redeployment within a responsible time frame. It effectively outlines the functions of the residual force that would remain in Iraq after redeployment, and makes an important contribution by focusing on the need for an accounting of U.S. interests in both Iraq and the wider region.''

I offer this letter at this time.

WOODROW WILSON INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR SCHOLARS,
Washington, DC, July 12, 2007.

Congressman IKE SKELTON,
Committee on Armed Services,
House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR IKE: Thank you for sharing HR 2956 on responsible redeployment from Iraq. The legislation outlines the right change in mission for U.S. forces in Iraq, and redeployment within a responsible timeframe. It effectively outlines the functions of the residual force that would remain in Iraq after redeployment, and makes an important contribution by focusing on the need for an accounting of U.S. interests in both Iraq and the wider region.

Beyond what is outlined in the bill, much needs to be done in Iraq. The training of Iraqi Security Forces must be intensified. An aggressive diplomatic offensive is urgently needed to press for national reconciliation in Iraq, and to advance stability in the region. And some measure of consensus needs to be reached in the country—and between the President and Congress—so that we can move forward with unity of effort.

The American people want a responsible transition for U.S. forces out of Iraq. This resolution provides that transition. It is not perfect, but it moves our national debate forward.

With best wishes,
Sincerely,

LEE H. HAMILTON.

At this time, Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to my friend and colleague, the gentleman from South Carolina who is our distinguished majority whip, Mr. CLYBURN.

Mr. CLYBURN. Let me thank our chairman for yielding me this time.

To date, we have spent almost half a trillion dollars on the Iraq war. Over 3,600 American lives have been lost, and more than 26,000 Americans have been wounded. When the President announced his escalation plan 6 months ago, Defense Secretary Robert Gates said it would only last a few months. Majority Leader BOEHNER said we would know whether or not the escalation succeeded or failed within 90 days. And Secretary Rice said we would not stay married to a plan that is not working.

Since the President announced this surge, we have lost nearly 600 American troops and spent more than $60 billion. In fact, the monthly cost in lives and resources has increased dramatically since the war began.

Today, the American people received an interim report from the President on his escalation plan. This was the verdict: None of the 18 benchmarks he outlined in January have been reached. In fact, it clearly illustrated how far the Iraqi Government is from political progress and national reconciliation.

A recently released national intelligence report concludes that al Qaeda has reconstituted its core network and may be a stronger terrorist organization than it was a year ago. In fact, it could be closer to pre-9/11 strength and reach.

Republicans have spoken out against this war, failed policies in Iraq yet, out of fear of being called names, are reluctant to vote against this resolution.

What have we come to when if people express their consciences, they are called names? It's beneath the dignity of the sacrifices of our men and women, and I ask my colleagues to vote for this resolution.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, it's been asked that we consider this debate in such a way that our sons and daughters are involved, and that's why the gentleman who just spoke, Mr. WILSON's son has done a tour in Iraq. The gentleman I am going to announce now, Mr. KLINE, has a son who has done a tour as a helicopter pilot in Iraq.

I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Minnesota.

Mr. KLINE of Minnesota. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, the proponents of this bill are fond of citing historical examples as they declare the futility of combat operations in Iraq. The CONGRESSIONAL RECORD is full of stories describing the failed British invasion of Gallipoli or the far more popular comparisons to the American experience in Vietnam.

Another more prescient historical comparison, however, was made by the British author George Orwell. Contemplating the defeatist rhetoric of the English intelligentsia during the German offensive against Britain in World War II, he remarked, ''The quickest way of ending a war is to lose it. And if one finds the prospect of a long war intolerable, it is natural to disbelieve in the possibility of victory.'' Those in favor of the bill presented on the floor today, Mr. Speaker, do not believe in the possibility of victory, despite the protests of the soldiers and Marines returning from the battlefield saying otherwise.

By advocating a rapid withdrawal, they endorse the quickest way of ending the war, by losing it. It has been less than a month since the full force of troops requested by military commanders arrived in Iraq, but already some have declared the operation to be a failure. General Petraeus arrived in Baghdad in February with a new strategy designed to reinforce the Iraqi security forces confronting al Qaeda, terrorists and Iranian-supplied insurgents. Rather than giving him the opportunity to fully implement his surge strategy, opponents in Congress immediately sought to undermine his credibility and his ability to command.

Mr. Speaker, our troops serving in Iraq don't need 435 armchair generals dictating the tactical movements of troops, as this legislation would surely do. They have true commanders whose professional military skills have been honed by decades of military service. They need us to renew our commitment to them and their commanders. And more importantly, they need us to trust their commanders' decisions.

General Petraeus said in a letter to his troops, ''Success will require discipline, fortitude and initiative, qualities that you have in abundance.'' The question before us today, Mr. Speaker, is, do we have those qualities?

Mr. PATRICK J. MURPHY of Pennsylvania. I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. KUCINICH).

Mr. KUCINICH. I rise in opposition to the bill.

We've lost over 3,600 of our brave service men and women; 1 million innocent Iraqis have perished in the war. We're now telling Iraqis, whose country the U.S. destroyed, whose reconstruction funds the U.S. mishandled, whose social networks have been shredded, stand on your own feet, while we try to steal their oil under the cover of occupation.

This bill will not end the war. This bill will not end the occupation. It doesn't take a vote to end this war. We must inform the administration that the $97 billion appropriated last month is the end of the financing for the war. Use the money that is in the pipeline through October 1st to bring the troops home. Compel the President to put together an international peacekeeping security force which would move in as our troops leave.

We could have our troops home by October 1. The question is whether we're ready to take a stand to do that, or whether or not we're going to vote on resolutions that give the American people the appearance that we want to end the war, without actually addressing the central issue that will end the war: Stop the funding.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I would like to follow our other two speakers who have sons who have served in Iraq with another gentleman, Mr. AKIN, the gentleman from Missouri, whose son Perry has served a tour in Iraq in the United States Marine Corps.

I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman.

Mr. AKIN. Mr. Speaker, I believe that the reason that Americans send us here to Congress is to have us to solve problems. And I don't think any of us mind, and I certainly don't mind, the accusation by Democrats to say that the war and the situation in Iraq is incompetently planned, or that we should change course, or that we should have bold, new initiatives. In fact, I think that's what we should be discussing. But unfortunately, what we have here today is not a matter of solving problems but rather of playing politics. Because the bill in front of us is not a bold plan. It doesn't have any segment of a plan at all. It just simply says, we're going to pull a bunch of troops out at a particular time. It

doesn't say how many; it just says we are going to pull some troops out. You know, the people who fought World War II would have liked very much to have ended the war more rapidly if they could just put something on a wish list and say, we're going to bring some troops home. But you can't do that until you win a war. And what we have before us is not a bold plan, and it's not a constructive suggestion to say, hey, you've incompetently managed the war, so here's a better way. There's no better way. It offers nothing other than just a bunch of wishes.

Now, if we want to send this to whoever it is that wants to grant wishes, that might be useful, but it's absolutely useless in terms of solving problems. And that's why we should be here.

I have to take the Democrats to task. You forgot, you guys are in the majority. The people elected you to solve problems. This doesn't solve a problem, it just simply says we want to bring some troops home. It doesn't say how or what we're going to do or what the strategy is. It says, oh, we've already done this one thing for a month, and now we just want to turn around and bring the troops home.

I think one thing that we can understand and one thing that we need to do is to stand away from this problem a little bit and put it in the broadest terms, and that is the terms as Americans.

There is one thing that has joined us together that we just celebrated, and that's the Fourth of July. And the Fourth of July we signed a Declaration of Independence, and the heart of that document, the heart of what America believes in is the fact that it says we hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal and endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights; among these is life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. And we stand tall on the Fourth of July when we remember that set of principles.

So the job of government is to protect those rights. And who is it that our sons and daughters are now fighting? They're people who believe that we blow up innocent people to make a political statement. They're people who believe that we use terror to compel people so that they don't have freedom and that people cannot pursue happiness and women cannot be educated. And so, is it so odd that we find ourselves fighting against people who believe the diametric opposite of everything America has ever stood for?

I taught those principles to my little kids when they were children. And they started the ''Marine Club.'' Here is a picture of them at a flag ceremony in their rag-tag uniforms bought from their Army surplus store, a bunch of little kids. Now what has happened is they have implemented those ideas. Well, what has happened is this little kid here is now Special Forces Air Force Academy, just graduated last month. And this other one, my son, has graduated from the little Marine club to the big Marine club. Here is a cache of weapons found in Fallujah. There is my son. And the reason that they are there and the reason that he risked his life numerous times is because he does believe there is a God that gives rights to all people, and that governments should protect life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. And when we, as Americans, forget that, then we start to lose our sense of direction in what we're doing.

Until there is a specific proposal, then there is nothing being offered at all. There is not leadership. And this is merely politics.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to my colleague, my friend, the gentlelady from Ohio (Mrs. JONES).

□ 1700

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Speaker, there is a statement that says: ''To believe that God will do everything while you do nothing is not faith but superstition.'' We have an opportunity to do something, not to wait for God to do it.

But let me start where I was. On May 21, I buried my dad, a veteran of the Korean War. He died at age 87. As I stood before that flag-draped coffin, I thought about all the mothers and fathers, aunts and uncles, children, nieces and nephews who have buried their loved ones as a result of this Iraqi war—3,600. I don't want to go to another funeral, I have been to five. Not another deployment, I have been to three. Not another memorial, I have been to six.

I want our soldiers to come home as soon as possible. We have an opportunity to do a deployment that makes sense, that fits within all that we can do as Members of Congress. Members of Congress, step up to the plate. Don't be afraid. Vote in favor of this redeployment.

Mr. HUNTER. How much time do we have left, Mr. Speaker?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from California has 5½ minutes remaining. The gentleman from Missouri has 9½ minutes remaining.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I would like to yield myself 4½ minutes.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to vote against this bill. I have great respect for my friend, the chairman of the Armed Services Committee. We work on many bills together, many pieces of legislation, and 99 percent of the time we find common cause in supporting the men and women who wear the uniform of the United States.

This bill is not one of them. I think that this bill, Mr. Speaker, is a call to retreat by the Democratic leadership of the House, which can only hurt this country.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I have been here before. I have listened to my colleagues on the Democrat side declare that the operation that we were undertaking in El Salvador to provide a little shield around that fragile government back in the 1980s was going to be ''America's next Vietnam.'' Yet we persevered. We kept that shield in place. We stood up a democratic government. Today, the free government of El Salvador supplies troops who stand side by side with Americans in Iraq.

I was here when Ronald Reagan stood up against the Soviet Union when they were putting SS–20 missiles around our allies, Germany and France, in Europe. Many people on the other side of the aisle said he was going in the wrong direction. He was going to start World War III. We were going to have a nuclear war because of the fact that the President was standing up to the Soviet Union. Yes, he did that, moving Pershing II and ground-launched cruise missiles to offset the Soviet missiles. At one point, they picked up the telephone and said, Can we talk? Ultimately we brought down the Berlin Wall. We freed, with American perseverance, hundreds of millions of people.

Now, we all agree that if Iraq works, it is to the benefit of the United States. When I say that ''if Iraq works,'' I mean if we have a nation which has a modicum of freedom for its people, a nation which will not be a state sponsor of terrorism, a nation which will be a friend to the United States, then we win. That is in our interest. That is what we are trying to build in Iraq.

We all agree that it is rough and tough and difficult. Mr. Speaker, it is dangerous. We all know that. That is why I had the last three speakers being fathers of Americans who have served in Iraq in the Marine Corps and in the United States Army. So we know it is difficult.

But, you know, every time I hear good news coming out, every time I hear that, I saw the message from one of our senior Marine commanders who said, We are crushing al Qaeda in Anbar province, then I pick up a statement by one of the Democrat leaders saying, We have lost. We have lost the war. I put this piece of legislation in that same category.

Twenty-seven days, less than 4 weeks after we put the surge in full force, we are already being called to leave. Now, we were just criticized, the President was criticized, for saying, This is the starting line. Well, I think we should criticize the Democrats for saying, This is the finish line. I have heard so many Democrat leaders say, We are going to stop the war. That has been said over and over.

Mr. Speaker, there is no Democrat leader here or anywhere who can stop the war. The only thing we can do is leave this battlefield. We can't stop this war any more than the people of Great Britain stopped the war when they just had this incident last week in Scotland. We can't stop this war any more than the victims in the Kobar Towers stopped the war. We can't stop this war any more than the marines in

the Beirut barrack had the power to stop the war. We can't stop this war any more than the sailors of the USS *Cole* had any ability to stop the war. This war has been forced on us. The only way we should end it, the only way we can end it, is to win.

Now we have the surge going on. It has been going on for 27 days. The leader in whom we all vest great confidence, General Petraeus, is to speak to us about the policies, about the tactics, about the strategies, and he will suggest adjustments on September 15. The idea that only 4 weeks after we have fully funded and we have fully deployed this surge we are somehow going to sound the retreat is a real disservice to this mission.

Mr. Speaker, what I would ask of all of our Members, Democrat and Republican, is vote against this call to retreat. If we stop fighting the terrorists, we will start losing this war against the terrorists.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. PELOSI), my friend, my colleague, the Honorable Speaker of the House of Representatives.

Ms. PELOSI. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Missouri for yielding, and I want to express the appreciation of so many in this Congress and this country to him for his tremendous leadership. For 30 years, he has been a great champion for our men and women in uniform; for the quality of their lives and their families as they serve our country; for their readiness as they prepare to go to war; for their well-being as they fight for our country; for his appreciation of the sacrifice that they and their families are willing to make.

Thank you, Mr. SKELTON, for being such a great leader, and thank you for giving us this opportunity today to speak on behalf of the American people, to take a step to end the war in Iraq and to have a vision of a strategic plan for stability in the Middle East.

Your bill is excellent and your timing, Mr. SKELTON, is perfect, because today the Bush administration released a progress report on the Iraq benchmarks required by the supplemental appropriations bill passed in May. The report makes clear that not even the White House can conclude that there has been significant progress on the Warner resolution benchmarks.

This is hardly surprising, given what is publicly available each day in the media: truck bombs killing scores of people in the markets; the supposedly secure Green Zone is rocked by a 30-inute mortar and rocket barrage; despite 30,000 additional American troops to increase security, Iraqi leaders are urging their people to arm themselves for their own protection; legislation to make the Iraqi political process more inclusive is stalled in the Iraqi legislature; and the cost of the war in precious lives and wounded American heroes continues to rise. Since the surge began, we have lost nearly 600 American troops.

The benchmarks that are being reported on today were endorsed by President Bush and the Government of Iraq to measure political reconciliation and the promotion of security in Iraq. In the 5th year of the war, the President's strategy has failed to meet those key benchmarks.

President Bush continues to urge patience, but what is needed and what the American people are demanding is a new direction. Remaining bogged down in a sectarian civil war in Iraq continues an unacceptable strain on our military and serves as an effective recruiting tool for al Qaeda. Reports about the resilience of al Qaeda in Iraq are alarming, but assessments that the global al Qaeda network is reconstituting its capabilities describes a far greater threat.

The war is not making our military stronger to protect our interests, the American people safer or the Middle East more secure. It prevents a refocusing of our efforts on the real war on terrorism in places like Afghanistan, and it hinders the development of a new direction strategy for greater stability in the Middle East.

As General Batiste has said, ''Iraq is distracting America from what should be the focus of main effort. It is in America's best interests to rethink our national strategy, deliberately disengage from Iraq, refit and rearm our military, get serious about homeland security, and prepare to win the next phase of the struggle against worldwide Islamic extremism.''

The American people see the danger of clinging to an untenable situation in Iraq. That is why by large margins they favor a redeployment of our troops. Passage of Chairman SKELTON's bipartisan bill will reflect the will of the American people and reaffirm the judgment of the House that the redeployment of our troops is a central element and an effective way forward in Iraq.

We will repeat that judgment legislatively as often as necessary, hopefully with an increasing level of support from our Republican colleagues, until pressure from the American people causes the President to change his mind and his policies.

To those who urge that we wait until September, I say that it has been 4½ years and half a trillion dollars, at least. We have already waited too long. The troops in their third and fourth tours in Iraq, those who have been so grievously wounded and the families of those who have died, deserve far better than that.

After more than 3,600 lives have been lost to a flawed strategy, we have a responsibility to create a new direction. After spending $329 million every day, $329 million every day on the war in Iraq, on a war that is not making our country safer, we have an obligation to change course. After 5 years of a failed policy in Iraq, we have a duty, not just to voice our opposition, but to vote to end the war.

Chairman SKELTON's bipartisan bill offers a step we can take today toward bringing the troops home, to creating a strategic vision for stability in the Middle East and for beginning to rearm our military.

Let us pass this bill and those that will follow in the coming weeks and provide the new direction on Iraq that the American people demand and that is so urgently needed. I urge a ''yes'' vote on the Skelton bill.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to our final speaker, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BOEHNER), the Republican leader.

Mr. BOEHNER. Mr. Speaker, let me thank my colleague from California for yielding and thank all of the Members for what has really been a very serious debate about our efforts in Iraq.

When we think about what we went through this past spring, the fight over funding our troops that went on for about 112 days here in the House, I had thought that we had come to some resolution. Forty-eight days ago we sent to the President of the United States a bill passed by this House, passed by the Senate and signed into law that would fund our troops through the end of September.

□ 1715

That same bill, we asked General Petraeus to report back to the Congress on July 15 his interim report and asked him to give a more complete report by September 15 of this year. And here we are some 48 days later saying, we give up.

One can only imagine why this bill is on the floor today. If Members were serious about this bill, we would have seen it come through committee, come through the Rules Committee. No, no, this bill showed up Tuesday night about 9 o'clock out of thin air that we were going to have this debate this week. One can only look at what is happening on the floor of the House and describe it as a partisan political stunt, because that is exactly what it is.

This House voted to support our troops, to fund our troops, and to fund our effort in Afghanistan and in Iraq. And here we are, once again, back here posing for holy pictures, as our good friend from Wisconsin would say.

This bill that we have before us makes our troops pawns in a partisan political battle. I don't think that is what anyone wants. I think this bill on the floor today undermines General Petraeus and undermines the mission that he has to help make Iraq and America safe.

So what we have here is not leadership; it is negligence. My colleague, the majority leader, my friend from Maryland, and the Speaker of the House both say we want to fight the terrorists; we want to fight them where they are. Well, who is our biggest enemy in

Iraq today? Who is the biggest fight that we have in Iraq today? It is al Qaeda. Al Qaeda is losing, and that is why we see the bigger bombs going off and the bigger demonstrations and the bigger casualties, because they are losing and trying to influence public opinion here in the United States.

But what surprises me about what we are doing here today is the willful ignoring of the consequences of failure in Iraq. If we fail in Iraq, we know what happens, we make America less safe. We know that we will provide a safe haven for al Qaeda to operate around the world out of their new safe haven that they will have in Iraq. We will destabilize the Middle East, we will endanger Israel. We will embolden the Iranians even more than they have already been emboldened, and we will allow al Qaeda to be stronger and to be able to recruit more people to kill Americans and our allies around the world. These are serious consequences for the American people and our allies around the world, and we can't shrink from our responsibility here.

General Petraeus is making progress. Not as much progress as we would all like for him to make, but he is making progress on the ground, as he reported in the report that came out today. The Iraqi government has made some progress. Not nearly enough, but to just pull the rug out from under General Petraeus, to pull the rug out from under our troops that are in Iraq fighting for our freedom and fighting for the freedom of the Iraqi people at this moment is absolutely the most negligent action that I have seen this House take yet on this issue.

Why can't we sit back and allow General Petraeus's plan to have a chance to succeed? Why can't we wait until September 15, as we had all agreed, for his final report to come forward and to assess the progress that is being made and what, if any, new direction ought to be taken?

I believe, and I think the American people believe, that we ought to allow the generals on the ground in Iraq to make those suggestions to us and not sit back and let politicians here in Washington make decisions about our future and about our safety.

But while we are sitting here debating this meaningless bill that we have before us, we could be acting on serious legislation to help make America safer. There is a giant loophole in the terrorist surveillance program that means that activity between terrorists overseas cannot be acted upon and cannot be listened to by this government. There is information that would help make America safe, that would bring more terrorists to justice; information that is being left on the table because of partisan political games in this House. Why don't we bring the FISA modernization bill to this floor? Why don't we give the NSA the terrorist surveillance program and other agencies the ability to track these terrorist activities and these terrorist phone calls and information movement that we know today that we can't touch and we can't use?

We all know through reports over the last couple of days that al Qaeda has increased in its strength. We also know from news reports over the last couple of days that there has been increasing chatter among terrorists around the world. And yet here we are debating a meaningless bill that undermines our troops, ignoring the fact that there is information that could help keep America safer that we can't touch because this House will not act. I think that is negligent, and I think it is irresponsible.

I would urge my colleagues to let's let General Petraeus and the troops have a chance to succeed. Let's help them in their mission to help make Iraq safer and to make America safer, and the way we do that is to take this bill that we have before us and defeat it.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

I just heard the minority leader say that we are willfully ignoring the consequences of Iraq. That is what I'm talking about, the willful consequences of Iraq when I spoke a few moments ago about the stretch and the strain and the difficulty of gluing our Army and Marines back together again.

This is serious business. We have a readiness crisis due to our extended operations in Iraq. Readiness in the Army's combat units has fallen to a dangerous level. Half of the Army's active brigades are in combat, and the remaining units are preparing for deployment. Units preparing for combat do not have all of their assigned personnel or equipment when preparing for combat. Combat units are experiencing equipment shortfalls; and let me mention that we have lost over 2,000 trucks and Humvees, over 100 tanks and armored vehicles, and over 100 aircraft. Combat units' readiness is being sustained at the expense of nondeployed units through the use of emergency war stocks.

I am worried. My heart breaks because no one seems to be listening on the other side, and no one who is opposed to this legislation mentioned in this debate anything about the stretch and the strain on our ground forces of the United States. That concerns me. That is the willful ignoring of consequences of Iraq. Something must be done.

Lee Hamilton, the co-chairman of the Iraq Study Group, spoke in a letter to me, which I read a few moments ago, endorsing this legislation as a responsible bill: We must do something, and it must be done today. This is serious business.

Let me salute the eloquence of my friend from California, Mr. HUNTER. He asked us to wait until September. We have had four Septembers already in Iraq. And you know what? It reminds me, and maybe some of those who have a little gray in their hair, Mr. Speaker, will recall a song that was popular decades ago, and that line in that song, the September song, that says, we haven't got time for the waiting game. We don't have time for the waiting game.

This is the right time, the right measure, the right issue. It is right for our ground forces. It is right for those in uniform. It is right for their families. It is right for our country. We have been engaged in Iraq since March of 2003. We have threats yet unforeseen.

If we continue to strain our ground forces as they are, we will not be ready for them. Hopefully they never come, but as sure as God made little green apples, those threats will be there. That's the purpose of this. The readiness of our forces and the capability of what they need to do for us in the days ahead, that is our job under the Constitution, to raise and maintain. That's what we are doing.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I say that we need to pass this legislation. We need to do so to pass the responsibility back to the Iraqis, to keep our forces in a higher state of readiness, and to make sure that the future is all the more safer for those of us here in our country.

Ms. BORDALLO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of this renewed debate on the war in Iraq. Iraq is today's signature issue, and it is one of the most divisive and complex ones before this Congress. The choices we make regarding Iraq will establish a legacy for the United States that will define our policy toward the Middle East region for a generation or longer. For that reason, it is my hope that we, as an institution and, indeed, as a country can agree upon a policy that will best protect our national interests and those of our allies and supports those servicemembers and civiians—and their families—who so bravely serve our country today in Iraq and elsewhere around the world.

If enacted, H.R. 2956, the Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act, the legislation before us today, would significantly change the direction of current operations in Iraq. Notably, this legislation would require the Secretary of Defense to commence the reduction of the number of United States Armed Forces personnel deployed in Iraq—beginning as early as 120 days after enactment of this bill—to a more limited presence by April 1, 2008. Also notable, this legislation would require the President to submit to Congress a new comprehensive strategy that would guide future operations in Iraq and that would include specific plans for diplomatic initiatives to engage United States allies and others in the region to bring stability to Iraq.

This strategy, according to H.R. 2956, would be written to reflect an honest assessment of the United States' national security interests in Iraq and the broader Middle East region. The document would be written to include the diplomatic, political, economic, and military components of a comprehensive strategy to maintain and advance such interests as the Armed Forces are redeployed from Iraq. This bill takes into account the importance of protecting United States diplomatic personnel and

combating terrorism in Iraq in any redeployment strategy. The strategy would also include a justification of the minimum force levels required to protect United States national security interests in Iraq after April 1, 2008, based upon a description of the specific missions of the Armed Forces to be undertaken. Of those missions, the strategy would require an assessment of the extent to which military personnel would fulfill roles traditionally performed by diplomatic personnel.

H.R. 2956 will generate Significant debate. Withdrawal timelines and a date have been discussed during recent debate on this issue. Consensus on this aspect of this bill will remain hard to reach. But this bill helps advances our national discussion with respect to the war in Iraq by calling for a new comprehensive strategy. Such a comprehensive strategy is long overdue.

I introduced H.R. 744, the Iraq Policy Revitalization and Congressional Oversight Enhancement Act on January 31, 2007. H.R. 744 would help enhance congressional oversight of Operation Iraqi Freedom by requiring the President to transmit periodically to Congress a consolidated, comprehensive report that would detail the terms of completion for Operation Iraqi Freedom. The bill would also require the President to seek to enter into a multilateral agreement—based on that plan—to help provide for the completion of Operation Iraqi Freedom. I am encouraged that the legislation before us today would require a similar plan be drafted by the President and communicated to Congress. Our soldiers and diplomats need a comprehensive, actionable plan that defines what it is that they need to accomplish in order to successfully complete their missions.

It is true the Government of Iraq must increasingly shoulder the burden of, and better fulfill its obligation to, govern from moderate positions, with uniformity, and with regard to the rule of law. But recent history tells us that we cannot rely on the Government of Iraq to govern in that manner. As H.R. 744 notes, the inability or unwillingness of the Government of Iraq to govern in moderate terms contributes to violence against United States servicemembers and Coalition forces, creates barriers to national reconciliation in Iraq, and impedes the expeditious completion of Operation Iraqi Freedom and the return of our servicemembers to their peacetime duty stations. The outcome of policies that are overly dependent upon a reportedly broken, corrupt, and sectarian government delivering on complicated policies, against great odds, and during a compressed period of time is uncertain. This fact underscores the importance of and the need for a new comprehensive strategy.

I believe that continued, honest and open exchange of views on the substance of what our country and our allies must achieve in Iraq in order to complete Operation Iraqi Freedom is needed. Finding an achievable, expeditious, and honorable way to complete Operation Iraqi Freedom should be a primary goal for all of us. We owe this to those who have sacrificed so much for this mission. But the situation in Iraq will not yield a solution easily. Nevertheless, we must endeavor to find one. In doing so we will be helping shape in the best way possible the legacy future generations of Americans will inherit and the one we will have to defend to history. The United States assumed a moral obligation to bring a minimum of order to Iraq when we, in a preemptive manner, attacked that county four years ago. History will judge us harshly if we act to abandon this obligation. The consideration of H.R. 2956 allows us an opportunity to formulate a national strategy that more effectively addresses the realities of Iraq.

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 2956, the ''Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act.''

This legislation would accomplish what the majority of the American people have said over and over that they support—the redeployment of American troops from Iraq. H.R. 2956 would require this redeployment to begin within 120 days, with completion to a limited presence by April 1, 2008.

The evidence continues to mount that the surge is not working. More than 3,500 troops have lost their lives and more than 26,000 have been wounded since this war began. The costs are too great to continue this failed policy.

The progress report that was presented to Congress today states that the Iraqi government has made limited progress in meeting political, economic, or security benchmarks and in some instances has made virtually no progress at all. The President said that when the Iraqis stand up, our troops will stand down. More than four years later, we are still waiting.

Increasingly, Republican senators are coming forward to announce that they support a change in policy in Iraq. I am glad that they are finally accepting what many of us have been saying for months. Yet the President continues to dig in by promoting his failed policy against the will of the American people and despite dwindling support within his own party.

This bill establishes a new direction for our forces in Iraq. I urge my colleagues to listen to their constituents and support this legislation.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this legislation calling for the safe and responsible redeployment of U.S. troops from Iraq. Make no mistake about it: The administration's incompetence in planning and executing the post-war occupation has brought us to this point. It is now Congress's responsibility to stand up for the majority of American voices who seek an end to this war. This bill provides for a redeployment of our troops not only so that they will be safe, but also so they will be focused on securing our Nation, not caught in the crossfire of a sectarian civil war in Iraq. We must provide for our men and women in uniform and their families.

Some assert with no basis that the war in Iraq has made us safer when, in fact, the opposite is true. I am deeply troubled by today's report from the National Counterterrorism Center which states that al-Qaeda is stronger now than at any point since 9/11. Terrorist cells capitalized on our preoccupations in Iraq to reestablish a presence in the Middle East and beyond. For years, the Administration has stubbornly insisted that Iraq is the central front of the War on Terrorism, but today's report clearly indicates just how damaging this war has been to our national security.

The President's progress report on Iraq issued today shows unsatisfactory improvement of security benchmarks. The report predicts a rise in insurgent violence in the coming months and an increased effort to disrupt life for Iraqis. In addition, there appears to be no improvement in eliminating the sectarian influences that have infiltrated Iraqi security forces. This is not acceptable. The administration has not delivered on its promises in Iraq and now we must move forward to establish a new direction. It simply is not fair to ask our soldiers and marines to continue to police someone else's civil war. It is especially irresponsible when considering the mountains of evidence from our own intelligence agencies pronouncing that this conflict cannot be solved by our military might alone. We must refocus our attention on the true threats to our Nation and our citizens.

Americans owe a debt of gratitude to our troops and their families for the sacrifices they have made during this difficult time. Servicemembers have had to endure difficult assignments and failed civilian leadership; but they have done so with honor and dignity. We must not forget the families who had to go without their loved ones for months at a time; the missed birthdays, baseball games, long nights away.

Mr. Speaker, the time for talking has ended; we must act, without delay, to redeploy our brave troops out of Iraq.

Mr. TOM DAVIS of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to this legislation.

The American people are not happy with the conflict in Iraq; I am not pleased either. Every day, my constituents tell me their concerns with Iraq, and I can understand their desire to put this behind us.

The reality is, however, that we cannot snap our fingers and make things all better; it's not simply going to go away.

My friends on the other side of the aisle have argued for years that we rushed headlong into Iraq without seriously considering the long-term consequences. Yet with this legislation they are repeating the very same mistake, only in reverse.

Staying the course is not a viable option, but neither is the fallacy of the orderly, phased withdrawal proposed by this legislation. You cannot gradually blow up a dam; once we begin to leave, chaos will immediately ensue. So I ask my colleagues, what do you propose to do after you order our troops away? What's your plan? Where's your responsible and workable strategy and vision?

Unfortunately, such a scenario may prove inevitable. But my colleagues hold forth this legislation as a plan: it's not. It's political pabulum. It might give politicians cover, but it exposes our servicemen to danger even greater than they already face. Ethnic, tribal, and religious killings will increase by an order of magnitude. The current refugee situation, already a disaster for Iraq's neighbors, will be dwarfed by the exodus to come. Our own men and women in uniform will be standing in front of a tsunami of violence.

What is required is a thoughtful, deliberative plan to make the best of an undeniably bad situation. Such a plan is embodied in the recommendations of the Iraq Study Group—the product of a concerted, bipartisan and sincere effort on the part of some of our brightest citizens.

I have long advocated we seriously follow—or at least debate—the recommendations of the Iraq Study Group. Foreign policy and diplomatic issues are usually complicated, nuanced and multi-leveled; the situation in Iraq is no different. Yet all we have been given to consider are all-or-nothing propositions.

I would welcome a bona fide discussion regarding how to move forward in Iraq and in the Middle East generally—that is what we owe the American people. What we have today is nothing but four hours cooing to the other side's base. This is not leadership. No amendments were made in order. There was no reaching out to Republicans like myself who felt the surge was a mistake and are looking for another direction. What we have is a framed ''take it or leave it,'' ''my way or the highway'' approach. That approach got us where we are—a healthy dialogue with options is needed to appropriately disengage.

Two months remain until General Petraeus will be summoned before Congress. He will give us—as we have charged him to do—an honest assessment on where this ''surge'' has lead our troops and the Iraqi people. I hope at that time, whether his testimony reveals success or failure, this body will have the wherewithal to have a serious, open debate on what options we have left.

Mr. CASTLE. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to the legislation before us today mandating a hard deadline for the Secretary of Defense to significantly reduce our troop presence in Iraq.

Over the last several months, similar attempts on the part of the Democratic leadership to require an arbitrary date for troop withdrawal have gone nowhere, wasting precious time debating legislation that would be vetoed by the President. While I believe strongly that we must change course in Iraq and bring our men and women home, it would be a mistake for Congress to think it could disregard the complexity of this conflict by simply picking a random date for withdrawal. Forcing such an important decision without considering the advice of military and foreign policy leaders, could lead to the loss of many more lives and open the door for sectarian chaos to spread across the entire Middle East.

For this reason, I have been a leading supporter of the Iraq Study Group, also known as the Baker-Hamilton Commission, which in December 2006 outlined a comprehensive approach for bringing a responsible conclusion to the conflict in Iraq. In fact, in early 2007, I went to the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives and called on the Bush Administration to change course in Iraq and implement the Study Group's recommendations for a new, robust diplomatic offensive in the Middle East. Since then, Secretary of State Rice has taken several encouraging steps to open the lines of communication with key nations like Iran and Syria, and I am hopeful that my efforts, and those of my colleagues, have prompted the White House to improve its diplomatic efforts in the region.

This September, Gen. David Petraeus and Ambassador Ryan Crocker will submit a very important report regarding the conflict in Iraq. While I am hopeful that this report will show progress, I also feel strongly that we must begin developing a responsible postsurge strategy. Therefore, on June 5, 2007, I joined over forty other Members of Congress—Republicans and Democrats—in introducing the Iraq Study Group Recommendations Implementation Act. The Study Group recommendations, which would bolster diplomacy, improve political and economic reconstruction, and handoff the combat mission to the Iraqis, represent the first truly bipartisan proposal for ending this conflict and bringing Americans home.

Clearly, there is no easy solution in Iraq. Still, it is extremely discouraging that the Democratic leadership continues to hold votes on ''symbolic'' withdrawal timelines, while refusing to consider the bipartisan Iraq Study Group proposal—legislation that as of today has been cosponsored by 25 Democrats and 33 Republicans in the House.

Mr. Speaker, the bipartisan Baker-Hamilton Commission serves as a model for how we must work together in a responsible fashion to stabilize Iraq and get our brave soldiers off the streets. Rather than wasting time debating arbitrary timelines that disregard the complexity of the situation, it is critical that we come together now in support of a responsible exit strategy. I am encouraged that thirteen additional Members of Congress have signed-on to the Iraq Study Group Implementation Act since we introduced it over a month ago and I am hopeful that Members from across the political spectrum will join me in uniting behind this crucial effort.

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to H.R. 2956 which, while a well-intended attempt to reduce our nation's seemingly unlimited military commitment in Iraq, is in so many respects deeply flawed.

I have been one of the strongest opponents of military action against Iraq. I voted against the initial authorization in 2002 and I have voted against every supplemental appropriations bill to fund the war. I even voted against the initial ''Iraq regime change'' legislation back in 1998. I believe our troops should be brought back to the United States without delay. Unfortunately, one of the reasons I oppose this legislation is that it masquerades as a troop withdrawal measure but in reality may well end up increasing U.S. commitments in the Middle East

Mr. Speaker, this is precisely the debate we should have had four years ago, before Congress voted to abrogate its Constitutional obligation to declare war and transfer that authority to the president. Some in this body were rather glib in declaring the constitution antiquated while voting to cede the ability to initiate hostilities to the President. Now we see the result of ignoring the Constitution, and we are bringing even more mayhem to the process with this legislation.

To those who believe this act would somehow end the war, I simply point to the title for Section 3 of the bill, which states, ''Requirement to reduce the number of armed forces in Iraq and transition to a limited presence of the Armed Forces in Iraq.'' However the number of troops are limited, this legislation nevertheless will permit an ongoing American military presence in Iraq with our soldiers continuing to be engaged in hostilities.

I also wish to draw attention to Section 4(b)(1), which mandates the President to submit a ''Strategy for Iraq'' by the beginning of next year. This ''strategy'' is to include:

> A discussion of United States national security interests in Iraq and the broader Middle East region and the diplomatic, political, economic, and military components of a comprehensive strategy to maintain and advance such interests as the Armed Forces are redeployed from Iraq pursuant to section 3 of this Act.

In other words, far from extricating ourselves from the debacle in Iraq, this bill would set in motion a policy that could lead to a wider regional commitment, both financially and militarily. Such a policy would be disastrous for both our overextended national security forces and beleaguered taxpayers. This could, in fact, amount to an authorization for a region-wide ''surge.''

Congress' job is to change the policy on Iraq, not to tell the military leaders how many troops they should have. I have attempted to do this with H.R. 2605, a bill to sunset after a six month period the authorization for military activity in Iraq. During this period a new plan for Iraq could be discussed and agreed. Plan first, authorization next, execution afterward. That is what we should be doing in Iraq.

In summary, Mr. Speaker, this legislation brings us no closer to ending the war in Iraq. It brings us no closer to bringing our troops home. It says nothing about withdrawal, only about redeployment. It says nothing about reducing U.S. presence in the Middle East, and may actually lead to an expanded U.S. presence in the region. We have no guarantee the new strategy demanded by this legislation would not actually expand our military activities to Iran and Syria and beyond. I urge my colleagues to reject this legislation and put forth an effective strategy to end the war in Iraq and to bring our troops home.

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, today the administration released its ''Assessment Report'' on Iraq. While attempting to tout ''progress,'' it is plain to see that this is more of the same rhetoric that has become so commonplace in this administration. The sad truth is that since President Bush launched this war, more than 3,600 American service men and women have been killed in Iraq, more than 26,000 have been injured, and the American taxpayer has spent nearly half a trillion dollars on this war.

The report highlights that the Iraqi government has not met a single one of the 18 security, political, and economic milestones that the Congress laid out as measurements for success. It also substantiates the fact that of the 18 benchmarks Congress laid out, Iraqis are making progress on only eight. The report also shows us that Iraqi security forces are not providing even-handed enforcement of the law and that Militia presence is still a prevalent force within the security services of a number of ministries.

It is for this reason that I am in support of the Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act. In addition to requiring the redeployment of American forces this legislation requires the development of a comprehensive strategy for U.S. policy in Iraq and limits missions any remaining forces in Iraq may undertake to duties such as counter-terrorism, and protecting American personnel at the embassy in Iraq.

It has been said that faith without action is merely superstition. We now have the opportunity to change course in this war. My father was a World War II veteran. He died a few months ago at the age of 87. As I looked at the flag draped across his coffin, I thought about the many mothers, fathers and families that had to bury their loved ones, many of them barely adults, and see that flag draped across their caskets.

I, along with the American people, have no more patience with regards to this war in Iraq. I've been to three deployments, five funerals and countless memorial services; I don't want to go to any more. I want to be able to go to one last homecoming celebration when we can bring an end to this war.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this legislation.

As a veteran of the U.S. Army myself, I strongly support our troops, our veterans and their families. Our troops have done everything they have been asked to do and done it exceptionally well. I am tremendously proud of all the troops from North Carolina and across America who have done their duty so admirably. They are our heroes, and we salute them. But as the Representative for Fort Bragg and Pope Air Force Base, I am very concerned about the state of readiness of America's armed forces.

I have traveled to Iraq twice, and after I returned last year, I said the Administration must change this failed policy. Specifically, I said that we need more focus on the threat of international terrorists. The National Counterterrorism Center has released a report today entitled: ''Al-Qaida Better Positioned To Strike the West'' that concludes Osama Bin Laden's network has been reconstructed while America's military is bogged down in the civil war in Iraq, with no end in sight.

H.R. 2956, written by Chairman IKE SKELTON of the Armed Services Committee, one of the most respected Members of this body and an expert on military policy, is a good first step for this needed new direction. It requires the Iraqi leaders to begin to provide for the security of their own country by redeploying American combat troops from the sectarian civil war and reconstituting our readiness and transitioning American forces to the mission of effective counterterrorism anywhere in the world where radical jihadists threaten America and our interests. Let me be clear that H.R. 2956 maintains the flexibility of the Commander in Chief to direct the operations of the armed forces. It simply calls for a change in policy and public accountability for a comprehensive U.S. strategy for Iraq.

North Carolina's senior Senator stated it well this week when she said, ''It is my firm hope and belief that we can start bringing our troops home in 2008.'' This bill begins to do just that. I urge my colleagues to join me in voting for it.

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of ''H.R. 2956, The Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act,'' and had I been on the floor today, I would have voted ''yes.''

Unfortunately, I was unable to attend due to the fact that I was given the high honor of receiving the NAACP Spingarn Award. However, this is an extremely important piece of legislation. One of our greatest responsibilities is the protection of our soldiers. The Democrats are determined to end this war and bring our young men and women back home. H.R. 2956 will now provide such a policy that will allow us to meet our national security interests in Iraq and the broader Middle East region by maintaining a minimal force. The Administration has provided a failed policy and it is time for a new direction. We understand that this transition must be well thought out and handled responsibly; with a view toward an enduring national security interest in the region.

This legislation, acknowledges that our military has accomplished the mission they were given in the original 2002 authorization to use force and that Iraq must now take leadership for its own future. For years Democrats have advocated for the responsible redeployment of American forces from Iraq. The relocation and redistribution of our soldiers is long overdue and enough American lives have been sacrificed for a failed policy. Democrats have argued that the Iraqis must take primary accountability for their country and their security. American presence in Iraq must be re-focused away from playing referee in a civil war. We must focus and limit our efforts to military missions such as counter-terrorism, training Iraqi security forces and protecting American personnel at the embassy.

The bill requires American forces to begin redeploying within 120 days and to complete the transition to a limited presence by April 1, 2008. The bill also requires a comprehensive strategy by January 1, 2008 for U.S. policy in Iraq, including a discussion of American national security interests in Iraq and the broader region, the specific missions remaining forces would undertake, and minimum force levels required to accomplish them. Finally, it requires the President to submit updates on the use of and need for any forces remaining in Iraq every 90 days starting on July 1, 2008. The President has been given ample time to bring our soldiers home. It is now time for us to act on their behalf.

I am committed to the homecoming of our brave men and women who have so valiantly completed their mission. So, I am honored to support this legislation.

Mr. KIND. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 2956, Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act of 2007.

For months, I, along with many of my colleagues in this chamber, have been calling on the President to forge a new direction with the war in Iraq. Our pleas have fallen on deaf ears.

Despite failing to meet his own benchmarks of progress, despite new reports of the unsustainable cost of this war, despite the tremendous dissatisfaction and disenchantment of the American people and members of his own party—the President recently made public statements to the effect that he is unwilling to change the course and try a new strategy.

The American people are dissatisfied with the deteriorating situation in Iraq. They are tired of finger-pointing and political gamesmanship. They want some answers, and they quite rightly expect and deserve one. As their elected representatives and leaders, I believe it is our responsibility in Congress to work together to move this country forward to an honest solution.

It is clear that American troops have accomplished their military mission. Yet we have now tasked them with forging political compromise as well, leaving them in the middle of a burgeoning civil war in Iraq. It is widely recognized that the sectarian strife taking place in Iraq right now cannot be solved through military means alone, and the President's refusal to entertain any new strategies has put our troops in an untenable position. I cannot continue in good conscience to ask our brave troops to risk their lives because I don't believe their sacrifice is being met with an equal commitment from the Iraqi people. The tough but necessary political compromises are not being made.

While the Iraqis are moving toward a transparent and effective government, what is missing is the necessary political accommodation to move the country towards reconciliation. Unfortunately, Iraqis by themselves appear incapable of achieving political progress. Instead, years later, they continue to lean on the United States and our military for stability, teetering on the brink of full-blown civil war without the will to make the political compromises necessary to peace.

Be assured that I am the last person in this chamber that wants to take irresponsible actions that would take the country into complete chaos. But American military power is not the solution to the war. More troops, more time, more money—these are not the answers. Congress needs to understand, as the American people do, that we must begin planning for a responsible withdrawal and redeployment of U.S. troops from Iraq. H.R. 2956 provides for a safe and orderly reduction of troops in Iraq and a transition to a limited presence of American troops in country for force protection, training of Iraqi Security Forces, and counterterrorism missions. I urge my colleagues to support this measure.

We must send a clear message to the Iraqi government that the patience of the American people is not endless, and that they must take control of their future. Passage of H.R. 2956 will help send that message.

I believe strongly that we must not wait any longer to send this message. The time to act is now, to force the hand of this Administration and the Iraqi government. Waiting any longer will simply lead to more fatalities for U.S. soldiers, Iraqi military, and civilians.

Finally, I would like to offer my heartfelt thanks and undying admiration for our men and women in uniform for their service to our country. May God bless them and their families during this difficult time. May God provide his special blessings and care for those who fell in the line of duty. And may God continue to bless these United States of America.

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this bill because I strongly support a responsible redeployment of our troops from Iraq.

It should not have been necessary for us to consider this bill today. Back in March, I voted for, and Congress passed, legislation that would have begun a draw-down of combat troops in favor of a disengagement strategy in Iraq. Regrettably, however, the president vetoed that legislation and then moved in exactly the opposite direction by escalating the number of troops committed to Iraq.

So, while a war can't be effectively led by committee, by failing to exercise responsible leadership, the president continues to make it necessary for Congress to assert itself. And thus the House is acting again today—and whatever the outcome, we will act again and again until we find the necessary support to change course in Iraq.

The war in Iraq has cost this Nation the blood of its soldiers, the treasure of its citizens, and the good will of our allies around the world. The average number of attacks, Iraqi civilian deaths, and coalition deaths are all at their highest levels since the invasion. Over 3,600 American soldiers have died in Iraq, and we are spending over $10 billion every month to continue this failed policy.

As a member of the Armed Services Committee, I must point out that the time is rapidly approaching when we will not be able to sustain the numbers of troops now deployed in Iraq without calling back our National Guard and Reserve for second or third tours or extending the tours of current active duty troops beyond the already extended 15 months.

And our increasing military and financial commitment to Iraq limits our options for addressing other critical national security concerns even as a new intelligence report indicates that al Qaeda is operationally stronger than a year ago. The most disturbing news is that al Qaeda has regrouped to an extent not seen since 2001.

Proponents of the President's escalation—the so-called ''surge''—say we haven't given it a chance to succeed. But it has been under way since January, with the Iraqi government fully aware of the steps toward reconciliation it needs to take to enable U.S. forces to stay—and still, those steps aren't being taken. Today's interim report from the Pentagon tries to make a bad situation look better, listing ''satisfactory'' progress on a number of benchmarks required by the Congress several months ago. But in reality, as the report states, ''the security situation in Iraq remains complex and extremely challenging,'' the ''economic picture is uneven'' and political reconciliation is lagging.

I had hoped that by holding the president and the Iraqi government accountable for achieving these benchmarks, we would gain the leverage necessary to pressure the Iraqi government to forge the political solution we all know is required. But it appears that the Iraqi government is either unable or unwilling to bring its feuding factions together to achieve these goals.

The Pentagon's report blames those of us pushing for redeployment for the lack of progress toward political reconciliation, saying it has been hampered by ''increasing concern among Iraqi political leaders that the United States may not have a long term-commitment to Iraq.''

But if the Iraqis won't make progress when we're there—and then threaten that they can't make progress if we leave—under what conditions will we see progress? The president has asked Congress to wait to act for the next progress report due in September. But what are we waiting for? He has dressed up his new approaches in many different ways since this war started over four years ago, and yet little has changed.

What we need—and what many Democrats and Republicans alike are calling for—is a responsible redeployment from Iraq. That is what the bipartisan Iraq Study Group ultimately called for, and that is the main reason I introduced legislation to implement its recommendations. I continue to hold out hope that we can forge a bipartisan consensus in favor of adopting the ISG as a foundation for a phased withdrawal strategy. I believe in this approach because responsible redeployment would allow Iraqis to take control of their own security by reducing U.S. combat forces while limiting the U.S. military to missions such as counter-terrorism, protecting U.S. Embassy personnel, and training Iraqi security forces. This bill will also allow necessary flexibility for our military forces to continue strikes against al Qaeda in Iraq.

This legislation calls for the beginning of redeployment and a troop draw-down within the next four months. It takes a different approach from H.R. 2237, the bill introduced by Representative JIM MCGOVERN (D–MA) that I opposed two months ago, in that it would not prohibit funding for our troops already in Iraq, and it requires the president to submit a comprehensive strategy providing specific plans for diplomatic initiatives and justifying the number of U.S. troops who would remain and explaining their missions.

I do question whether we can extricate all combat troops by April 2008, as it calls for—it could take as long as six months to move over one hundred thousand soldiers and their gear and to do this safely. This is one military exercise that we have to take seriously and spend time and resources to plan—because it could mean life or death for our men and women in uniform. But I believe we should set a target date now and begin this planning. This bill would force a change in strategy and mandate the start of a phased withdrawal and redeployment, and that is why I will vote for it.

Mr. BISHOP of New York. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of the Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act. Delivering the solemn promise we made to set a new direction in Iraq, this legislation provides us with the opportunity to reaffirm our support for the responsible redeployment of our troops and a refocusing of our efforts on the real threat that is facing America—fighting al-Qaeda in Afghanistan, tracking down Osama bin Laden, and preventing another terrorist attack against America.

Along with a great many of my colleagues, I spoke out against the President's surge strategy when it was announced in January. We argued then, as we reiterate today, that Iraq is engaged in a civil war and thus political, not military, solutions are needed to address the problems facing the region. Yet, the President continues to operate under the assumption that somehow, some way, there is a military path to success. In other words, his strategy continues to be ''stay the course'' writ large.

It has now been seven months since the President announced his surge strategy, with the stated goal of providing stability in Iraq so that the political reforms that are needed to secure the region can take place. Since then, more than 25,000 additional troops have deployed to Iraq, of whom 600 have been killed and more than 3,000 have been wounded. All of this while the Iraqi government has failed to meet any of the benchmarks endorsed by the President in January, violence rates are at an all time high, and a recent government report estimates that al Qaeda is the strongest it has been since the aftermath of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

Simply put, it is long past time for our involvement in this tragic episode to come to an end. The Iraqi people are the only ones that can bring a peaceful conclusion to this war.

It is unfair to ask our troops and their families to continue to sacrifice while Iraqi leaders have done so little to achieve the political and security goals asked of them. Therefore, it is imperative that we begin the gradual redeployment of troops as soon as possible to protect their lives and ensure the safety of America.

Mr. Speaker, I want to reiterate my opposition to this war. I believe the decision to invade Iraq is the single most devastating and misguided foreign policy decision our Nation has ever made. I will vote for the Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act because I believe it is time to bring our troops home and end our involvement in this civil war.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of The Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act, and I thank Chairman SKELTON for his leadership and his dedication to the readiness of our troops and the continuing excellence of the United States armed forces.

The President continues to ask this Congress and the American people to ''stay the course'' in Iraq. Well, Mr. President, today the American people and the Congress say, ''No more!!''

Instead, I add my voice once again to the growing number of retired military generals, the Iraq Study Group, and untold thousands of rank-and-file on the front lines who are calling for a new direction in Iraq.

The success of our military depends on a sound strategy. Yet, instead of fighting terrorists in the mountains of Afghanistan, our armed forces are overextended after four years of refereeing a civil war in the sands of Iraq.

The President's escalation of this war,—his so-called ''surge''—is not working. That much is clear. Since the escalation of this war 6 months ago, more than 25,000 troops have been sent to Iraq, 600 more U.S. soldiers have died and more than 3,000 troops have been wounded. Countless thousands of Iraqis are dead, and today the violence in Iraq is at an all-time high!

Our troops have performed heroically in Iraq, but the Iraqi government has failed to meet any of the benchmarks endorsed by the President in January. Political reconciliation within Iraq is non-existent. A change of course is long overdue.

The time has come for the United States to responsibly re-deploy our troops from Iraq and to refocus our efforts on protecting Americans from terrorism. The time has come for Iraqis to take primary responsibility for their country and their security.

Mr. Speaker, this bill will do exactly that.

Let me be clear on one additional point. Democrats support the troops. As a Member of the Appropriations Committee, I have consistently voted to fund our troops and provide our soldiers in the line of fire with the resources they need.

I do this because our brave service men and women are not risking their lives each and every day for one political party or the other. They are risking their lives for America.

Our Nation owes our troops a strategy that is worthy of their sacrifice. But ''stay the course'' is not that strategy. It is a slogan that continues to fail them.

No, Mr. Speaker, if we really want to support our troops, it is now time to get them out of Iraq and re-deploy them to other areas where they can fight the terrorists who have attacked, and who continue to threaten our Nation.

Ms. DEGETTE. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 2956, the ''Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act.''

This legislation mandates that we begin withdrawing our troops from Iraq within 120 days of enactment. This redeployment would have to be completed by April 2008. This is a commonsense measure to bring an end to our military involvement in Iraq. Frankly it is mindboggling that American troops are still fighting there in the first place.

For over 4 years we have worked to establish a secure, safe, and peaceful democracy in Iraq. Our military has done a valiant job in doing everything we asked of it. We have lost over 3,600 soldiers and more than 26,000 have been wounded in this effort. We have spent about $450 billion. Unfortunately, death and destruction still reign in Iraq.

President George W. Bush's plan is not working and the evidence of failure is mounting. President Bush announced his troop

''surge'' 6 months ago. During that time about 600 troops have been killed, 3,000 have been wounded, and $60 billion has been spent. The recently released White House interim report shows there to have been unsatisfactory progress by the Iraqi government in meeting many of the benchmarks laid out by President Bush back in January.

With respect to President Bush's political benchmarks, the Iraqi government has made unsatisfactory progress on all of them. What this Iraqi civil war requires is an Iraqi political compromise, but the available evidence suggests that no one within the government is willing to make the sacrifices needed to make that happen. Why should American soldiers continue to sacrifice under such circumstances? Not one more drop of American blood should be shed in pursuit of President Bush's failed Iraq policy.

The American people agree. Recent polling shows that over 60 percent of the American people now believe sending troops to Iraq was a mistake and 71 percent support withdrawing our forces by April 2008, just as H.R. 2956 would require.

Despite the views of the American public and the clear evidence on the ground that our continued military presence in Iraq is not the solution, President Bush stubbornly refuses to change course and bring our troops home. Congress has the power and obligation to do what is right and force a new policy. Passing H.R. 2956 is the first step on that road, and I encourage all of my colleagues to vote in favor of this reasoned legislation.

Mr. ORTIZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this bill to begin a responsible redeployment of our forces now in Iraq. The defense of our homeland is paramount and we are vulnerable for an attack. The war in Iraq has damaged the readiness of our military. Our ability to defend our Nation is at stake.

Today's report on benchmarks is further evidence that this Administration can only see the situation in Iraq through rose-colored glasses. It's time for serious policy makers—for American patriots—to find a way out of Iraq so we can focus on defending our Nation against al Qaeda, as well as other threats to national security.

This administration has no plan to defend the United States, and they did great damage to the defense of this country with the ''catch and release'' operation they had on our southern border. ''Catch and release'' sent all non-Mexicans who came in illegally to the interior of the Nation with a paper compelling them to return for deportation.

By virtue of ''catch and release'' we face the prospect of possibly hundreds of cells already in country awaiting an attack order.

What happens if al Qaeda attacks a nuclear facility? Do we have a plan for that? Who moves into defensive and containment posture? Do we even have the troops presently in country to provide that defense and containment?

What happens if there is an attack on a military base? There will be military officials nearby, but how will they respond?

What happens if there is a bio-chemical attack in an American city? Who responds—and how will our citizens be protected?

A shoulder launched weapon from a building top in New York, Washington DC, or another major American city would be devastating . . . and show our lack of preparation 6 years after 9/11 when many of us ran from these buildings, not sure we would ever see them again.

Today's report about the resurgence of al Qaeda is no surprise for us. Ever since Congress was deliberately misled by the President into authorizing the Iraq war in 2002, the war in Iraq sucked precious resources away from our focus on al Qaeda. When we invaded Iraq in 2003, the Iraq al Qaeda presence was in a single village in Kurdistan along the Iranian border. Today, it is impossible to estimate the number of al Qaeda fighters we have drawn to Iraq through our invasion.

We inadvertently aided al Qaeda through our invasion of Iraq by giving al Qaeda a recruitment opportunity for radical Muslims throughout the Middle East; giving al Qaeda the means to perfect urban warfare; tying down our military in Iraq, giving al Qaeda space to grow and operate, and most urgently, deeply damaging the readiness of the U.S. military and making the U.S. less safe for ourselves and our children.

At least one branch of this government must begin the painfil process of finding an ending to our involvement in a civil war we facilitated.

Many colleagues here seem to believe our withdrawal will leave behing an even bloodier civil war. I agree; but that will be the case whenever we leave there . . . be it today, tomorrow, next year, or a decade from now. The only difference we can make in that regard is how many American souls will die on the Iraqi battlefield between now and the day our forces withdraw.

Others have pinned all hope on the fledgling Iraqi government seated on March 16, 2005 . . . a government that has been unable to elect a Speaker for their Parliament and rarely produces a quorum. We have lost 1,282 American soldiers during the same time.

Bear in mind, al Qaeda is not the only threat we face in the future . . . North Korea, the militarization of South America . . . and many other threats are a reality for this nation in the decade to come. We must be prepared for all of them.

Mr. Speaker, I urge the adoption of this bill.

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this resolution.

It is long past time that the disaster in Iraq is brought to an end.

The President's failed policy in Iraq has been repudiated by the bipartisan Iraq Study Group, his inability to extricate the United States from a quagmire in the desert has been rejected by the voters, and we must change course. The President has proven himself to be either blind to the reality on the ground in Iraq or simply uncaring of what that reality means for the stability of the Middle East and the security of the United States of America.

The President took this country to war on false premises. There were no weapons of mass destruction, there was no imminent threat, there were no operational ties to al-Qaeda. And the administration knew, because we had U.N. weapons inspectors on the ground in Iraq for months before the invasion, that the so-called ''intelligence'' pointing to an active and dangerous Iraqi WMD program was simply wrong. Over and over again, Hans Blix and his teams of inspectors would launch surprise visits on sites that the CIA had pointed them to, and over and over again the U.S. intelligence would be proved incorrect.

We have been fighting in Iraq longer than we fought in the Second World War. Within a few months, we will have spent more money in Iraq than we did in the more than 10 years we were in Vietnam. And while a very small segment of our citizenry is being asked to make the ultimate sacrifice for this adventure by sending their loved ones to war, the Bush administration has given billions of dollars in tax breaks to the richest Americans. If this war were truly a national struggle, underpinned by the faith and support of the public, the sacrifices would be shared by all instead of borne by the few.

Since President Bush infamously declared ''Mission Accomplished'' over 4 years ago, the situation has only gotten worse and worse. The administration never had a plan to win the peace, and still does not, and as a result the peace cannot be won. Our brave men and women in uniform are caught in the midst of a multifaceted civil war which can only be brought to an end with political reconciliation, not military engagement.

Unfortunately, the President stubbornly refuses to understand the nature of the conflict into which he has dragged us. He refuses to change course, but more of the same cannot any longer be an option. We must extricate ourselves from a sectarian civil war which is bleeding our military every single day. This bill will begin the responsible redeployment of US forces out of Iraq within 120 days, and complete that deployment by April 1, 2008. On that date, we will have been in Iraq for more than 5 years.

Mr. Speaker, I commend Chairman SKELTON for bringing this resolution before us and I urge its adoption.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the rule and urge my colleagues to support the bill.

It has become painfully obvious that the White House is incapable of changing course in Iraq. The Bush administration's talking points about the situation in Iraq change from week to week, but the fundamental strategy remains the same. The President is determined that our troops will remain in Iraq no matter what.

The latest White House talking points are aimed at getting the American people to believe that the surge in Iraq just began a couple weeks ago, instead of 6 months ago. In fact, the President announced the surge back on January 10, and the troop escalation began in early February.

The White House is emphasizing today that it finds that Iraq is making ''satisfactory'' progress in some areas, such as the cooperation between U.S. forces and tribal sheiks in Anbar province as well as the formation of a Constitutional Review Committee, although the constitutional review itself is not complete. The reality is that the Iraqi Government has not approved a law to share Iraq's oil wealth. It has not enacted legislation to reform the De-Ba'athification laws. It has not disarmed the militias. It has not made progress on ensuring that Iraqi Security Forces are providing even-handed enforcement of the law. It has not made progress toward increasing the number of Iraqi Security Forces units capable of operating independently. It has not made satisfactory progress toward establishing a date for provincial elections.

In the past 6 months, nearly 600 of our troops have died. More than 13,000 Iraqis have died. The level of violence in Iraq has not decreased. The violence and attacks have

simply shifted away from places where our forces are concentrated.

Six months into the surge, there is no indication that the Iraqis are coming together to make the political decisions necessary to end the sectarian violence that is tearing their country apart. Time has shown that whatever small chance there is of the Iraqi factions coming together, it will not happen as long as the U.S. military commitment in Iraq remains open-ended. We need to change course. The bill before the House does just that. It requires the Department of Defense to begin a phased and orderly redeployment of our combat troops from Iraq starting in 120 days of enactment, with the troop reduction to be complete by April 1, 2008. No other way has worked to convince the Iraqis that they need to step up and reach a political settlement to end the sectarian violence.

Mr. FARR. Mr. Speaker, I commend my good friend and colleague, Armed Services Chairman IKE SKELTON, for authoring H.R. 2956, the ''Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act.'' the Democratic Congress has drawn a line in the sand with this bill. It requires accountability from the Administration that the American people demand and deserve: stop the open-ended commitment in Iraq; stop the surge; and, stop sending our brave men and women in uniform to fight a ''winnable'' war. We have given this Administration enough time, enough U.S. blood, and too much hard-earned American dollars.

Let's call this war what it is—a civil war.

The solution for Iraq is not military. The solution for Iraq is political and diplomatic. We must once again engage our allies and Iraq's neighbors to renew a quest for a peaceful solution in Iraq. I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 2956. Support our valiant troops by voting to bring them home. Now.

Mr. MITCHELL. Mr. Speaker, in January, Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki publicly committed to meeting a set of benchmarks, including quelling sectarian violence, disarming sectarian militias and developing a plan to share oil revenues equitably among all Iraqis.

In May, Congress, in a bipartisan way, made clear that the Iraqi government should be held accountable for meeting those benchmarks and required the President to report on the Iraqi Government's progress in meeting those goals.

That report, which was released today, demonstrates the President's surge is failing and that the Iraqi Government is failing to meet the benchmarks it agreed to meet 7 months ago.

The Iraqi Government has not moved toward national reconciliation. This morning, we learned that Director of Central Intelligence General Michael Hayden, an accomplished four-star general, told the bipartisan Iraq Study Group 8 months ago that Iraq's leaders are ''unable to govern.''

Now, the inability of the Iraqi Government to govern seems irreversible. If there is no functioning government in Iraq, how do we expect to fix the problems in that country militarily?

We continue to see the serious consequences that result from that inability to govern. Sectarian violence has not been quelled; it continues to escalate. Sectarian militias have not been disarmed; they continue to wreak havoc. There has been no progress on a plan to share oil revenues equitably among all Iraqis.

The situation is rapidly deteriorating and American troops are caught in the crossfire.

Continued U.S. involvement in Iraq must be contingent on the Iraqi Government keeping its word. Benchmarks without accountability are not benchmarks at all. They are blank checks. And I refuse to allow the Iraqi Government, or any government, to have a blank check on American lives.

The time has come to redeploy American troops from Iraq and reduce the U.S. military role in Iraq. We must do so in a responsible way that will help us better meet our strategic objectives and renew our fight against global terrorism.

I am convinced that this course, combined with stepping up our diplomatic efforts, provide the best opportunity to achieve our strategic objectives, reduce sectarian violence and force Iraq's leaders to get serious about Iraqi reconciliation and stabilization efforts.

As their failure to meet the benchmarks clearly illustrates, Iraq's leaders are unwilling and incapable of moving toward national reconciliation. If the United States allows the Iraqi government to have an open-ended timetable to meet these benchmarks, and demands no accountability, our troops may literally be in harm's way forever. We cannot continue to allow the safety of our troops to be placed in the hands of Iraqi leaders who have failed to keep their word or are incapable of meeting their obligations.

Make no mistake: the deteriorating situation in Iraq is not a result of military failure. Our nation's armed forces crushed Saddam Hussein's regime in one of the most complete and impressive military victories in the history of our country.

The disaster in Iraq is a result of the Bush Administration's failure to plan and failure to listen. It is a result of misplaced trust in the Malaki government. It is a result of mismanagement and incompetence.

Even worse, the administration's failed policy in Iraq has limited the success of our mission in Afghanistan, and hindered our ability to destroy al Qaeda's international operations. As a result, U.S. intelligence analysts say al Qaeda is the strongest it has ever been since the September 11, 2001, attacks. We must renew our commitment to leading the fight against global terrorism and destroying al Qaeda.

Our Nation is at a critical crossroad in Iraq, and Congress has a difficult choice to make. But one thing is clear: staying the course is not an option. We can ill afford to continue down the same course of failure that has undermined our mission in Iraq, and undermined our ability to protect our Nation from terrorist threats.

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this bill. If enacted, this act would compel the President to begin redeploying our troops from Iraq not later than 120 days after it becomes law. It creates the appropriate framework and mechanisms for ensuring an orderly withdrawal of our forces, and it puts the responsibility for Iraq's security where it belongs—on the Iraqis.

But once again, the President has declared—long before this bill was brought to the House floor—that he would veto it or any other measure that attempted to correct his failed policy in Iraq. He has become intransigent and disconnected from the reality on the ground in Iraq, and indifferent to the will of the American people.

The President's much-vaunted ''surge'' has been underway for 6 months now, and the results are obvious: Iraq is no less violent and chaotic than before the ''surge'' began. Indeed, American casualties—both killed and wounded—have been on the rise for nearly a year, long before the surge started. By pouring more troops into Iraq, the President has simply given the insurgents more targets to shoot at.

Perhaps, even worse, he is ruining our ability to work with other countries to foster peace in the Middle East, and he is fanning the flames of a conflagration that is now likely to engulf other countries around Iraq.

The President's refusal to change course in Iraq is an enormous injustice to the brave Americans he has put in harm's way. Our troops accomplished the goal of removing Saddam Hussein from power more than 4 years ago. They accomplished the mission that they were given—and then were given another mission for which they were not provided the proper equipment and resources: being forced to act as referees in Iraq's growing civil war. Our troops deserve better.

Moreover, the President and his advisors have continued their well-established pattern of moving the goal post on his Iraq policy. Every year, the Congress has been told that Iraq's security forces would be ready to assume responsibility for their country's security in 12 to 18 months. And every time we reached that 12 to 18 month benchmark, the Administration would reset the goal post another 12 to 18 months down the road. The American people have had enough of this bait-and-switch game. Iraqis must accept responsibility for their country's future.

Indeed, the President's troop increase has played into the hands of Iraq's current government, which continues to claim that the additional American forces are needed to quell the violence—without mentioning that it is Prime Minister Maliki's own policies that are helping to fuel that violence. Prime Minister Maliki's refusal to purge his security forces of militias and sectarian death squads is a prime reason why Sunni insurgents continue their attacks against Iraq's security forces. Prime Minister Maliki's refusal to compromise on the distribution of power and oil revenue among Iraqis is why the insurgency has only gained in intensity over the past year. How long will we continue to provide military and financial support to his corrupt and ineffectual government? How much longer should our brave fighting men and women serve as referees in the middle of a spreading civil war?

If passed, this bill would compel Iraq's leaders to face the fact that we will not continue to indefinitely provide for their country's security with the lives of America's military men and women, and that they must take the necessary political steps needed to end the violence. It is for all of these reasons that I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support this bill.

Mr. STARK. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of ending the War in Iraq.

Last November, the American people demanded a new direction for Iraq. Today, the new Democratic Congress is taking a concrete step toward bringing our troops home.

The Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act sends a loud and clear message to President Bush. It requires the President to begin withdrawing American forces in the next 120

days and to complete the transition to a limited presence by April 1, 2008.

This legislation is an important and historic step forward, but it does not go far enough. I support the immediate withdrawal of all American troops.

Not next year. Not next month. Today.

I oppose additional funding for the war because the situation in Iraq isn't getting better, it's getting worse. Since Bush announced his intent to escalate the war and deploy an additional 20,000 American troops, 600 have been killed and more than 3,000 have been wounded.

And for what? The administration just acknowledged in a congressionally mandated report that since the ''surge,'' there has been little to no progress on a host of political, security and economic benchmarks proposed by the President himself.

In total, the war has taken the lives of more than 3,600 American service men and women and injured more than 26,000. Countless innocent Iraqis have been killed or maimed.

This loss of life is obscene and must stop.

I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting H.R. 2956 and commit to withholding additional money for Iraq when Congress debates the next war funding bill in September.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Mr. Speaker just a little over a week ago I traveled to Fort Bragg in North Carolina to see yet another 100 men and women of the Virgin Islands National Guard off to Iraq.

Among those who left on Sunday and are now deployed, there are several who are doing their second tour as well as a father and his daughter.

It was not easy, but I put my best face forward while there because I knew that it was much harder—extremely difficult—for their families.

Mr. Speaker, the only reason I could smile and be upbeat in my message to them is because I knew Democrats would be here today, passing this measure to set a time limit for our troops to be deployed in Iraq and to begin their return home.

And so Mr. Speaker, I rise to support this resolution as the first step to ending U.S. involvement in the civil war that Iraq has become. And I will be here in full support on the efforts that will follow to close Guantanamo and to ensure that the White House responds in a timely and appropriate manner to what they are being directed to do in H.R. 2956 today.

And I hope we will insist that he does so long before January 2008.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to once again applaud your leadership and that of Chairman IKE SKELTON.

Because of H.R. 2956, ''The Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act'', and the measures that will follow, I am confident we will see a day, in the not too distant future, when no other American or son or daughter of our allies will die for a war we cannot justify.

Ms. KILPATRICK. Mr. Speaker, the Greek historian Herodotus is often called the ''father of history.'' In his work, The Histories, he attempted to chronicle the origin and outcome of the Greco-Persian War so that future generations could learn from experience. Unfortunately, for the men and women in Iraq and their families and for the American people, President Bush refuses to use what we have learned to revise our strategy for Iraq, redeploy our troops, and refocus on the priorities and protection of America's families.

The President continues to insist that America's involvement in the war in Iraq is an integral part of the war on terrorism. The Iraq Study Group, among other objective observers, repeatedly refuted this statement. Perhaps worse than this statement is that, despite the President's claims, the evidence indicates that progress is not being made in Iraq:

America's families unjustly continue to bear the burden of war; they have paid the price with the loss of 3,600 lives and with injuries to 26,000 service men and women. The order of nature has been violated—fathers and mothers are burying their sons and daughters. How many more of our loved ones will pay the ultimate sacrifice for the freedom of others?

America's families have paid more than $450 billion in taxes that have been use to fund failure instead of our future. We build stronger families and a stronger America when we provide our citizens with access to quality education, affordable housing and healthcare, well-paying jobs, and financial security. How much more will we spend before we realize that the very foundation of our future has crumbled beneath our feet?

The Iraqi Government has failed to meet critical benchmarks endorsed by the President in January. The President has said, ''when they stand up, we'll stand down.'' The Iraqis have not amended their Constitution, passed an equitable oil sharing law, reformed laws to provide government jobs to former members of the Ba'ath Party, or held provincial elections. When are the Iraqis going to stand up?

Seventy percent of Americans support withdrawing almost all U.S. troops from Iraq by April 2008; half do not believe that the increase in U.S. forces since January of this year has made a difference. In addition, several Republicans have joined Democrats in calling for a new direction in Iraq. However, the President continues to wage a war with complete disregard for the concerns of the American people and the counsel of military leaders. When will the President connect the dots and see that the picture he has drawn is not a pretty one?

The Iraq Study Group stated that the use of the military in Iraq has passed; it is time for diplomacy to take place. Regrettably, diplomacy has not been seriously considered by the President, and internecine warfare and outright civil war has filled the vacuum of this viable option in Iraq. Also, the refugee problem in Iraq has worsened the situation in the Middle East; to date, the United States has taken in less than 200 refugees from Iraq after promising to take in thousands. Why haven't we taken in more refugees or fully allowed diplomacy to bear fruit?

These are among the many reasons why I support H.R. 2956, the Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act. I have opposed this war from the beginning and have been engaged in a continuing fight to change course. While our troops have performed heroically, violence remains high, and we must remove them from harm's way; we must require Iraqis to take responsibility for their own fate, and we must refocus on investing in America's families. This legislation—which is consistent with the advice of military and foreign policy experts, ensures the safety of our men and women in uniform, addresses our commitment to fighting terrorism, and reflects the will of the American people—allows us to do just that. This bill:

Acknowledges that our military has accomplished the mission they were given in the original 2002 authorization to use force and that Iraq is now responsible for its own future.

Requires American forces to begin redeploying within 120 days and to complete the transition to a limited presence by April 1, 2008.

Reiterates that the redeployment must be done in a safe and orderly way, with maximum attention paid to the protection of American forces.

Requires a comprehensive strategy by January 1, 2008, for U.S. policy in Iraq, including a discussion of American national security interests in Iraq and the broader region, the specific missions remaining forces would undertake, and minimum force levels required to accomplish them.

Names specific missions that the President must consider, but it does not require or authorize those missions.

Requires the President to submit updates on the use of and need for any forces remaining in Iraq every 90 days starting on July 1, 2008.

Dag Hammarskjold, a Swedish statesman and United Nations official, once said, ''There is a point at which everything becomes simple and there is no longer any question of choice, because all you have staked will be lost if you look back. This is life's point of no return.'' Certainly, the President and administration have reached that point. For them, the decision to stay the course is simple because it is too difficult to admit failure. However, as the representative for 670,000 of God's best in Michigan's 13th Congressional District, I am willing to make the hard choices. I believe the majority of my colleagues are, too.

The President can no longer afford to let his pride get in the way of making the right decision. Our troops, our families, our international reputation, and our future are at stake.

In the Bible, we read in Chronicles 7:14 that ''If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves . . . and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and . . . will heal their land.'' The international community—the billions of us who inhabit our home of planet earth—are children of God. We must learn to walk in the light and in love. It is out of my love of God, my love of the Constitution, my love of this country, and my love of my constituents, that I ask my colleagues to join me in support of the Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act.

Ms. LINDA T. SAENCHEZ of California. Mr. Speaker, today we take a firm stand against the President's tragic war policy in Iraq. Today we vote on H.R. 2956—the Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act.

This legislation is another appeal to a tone-deaf administration that our current path in Iraq is failing. The American people have had enough. They have had enough of the needless bloodshed; they've had enough of the misleading explanations; they've had enough of the broken promises; they've had enough of the lack of vision from this President.

The President's policy is based on false pretenses, for which there are now only imperfect options. After losing more than 3,500 of our servicemembers, and spending close to half a trillion dollars, it is time to bring our troops home. I salute the courage and professionalism of our soldiers who have served our country in Iraq. They overthrew an authoritarian regime and captured a dictator. Now it

is time for our commander-in-chief to bring them home. The ongoing instability in Iraq is a political problem that requires a political solution.

To continue to ask our service men and women to make the ultimate sacrifice for this misguided policy is simply immoral. I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this legislation because we must bring our troops home.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. All time for debate has expired.

Pursuant to House Resolution 533, the bill is considered read and the previous question is ordered.

The question is on the engrossment and third reading of the bill.

The bill was ordered to be engrossed and read a third time, and was read the third time.

MOTION TO RECOMMIT OFFERED BY MRS. WILSON OF NEW MEXICO

Mrs. WILSON of New Mexico. Mr. Speaker, I offer a motion to recommit.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is the gentlewoman opposed to the bill?

Mrs. WILSON of New Mexico. In its present form, I am.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Clerk will report the motion to recommit.

The Clerk read as follows:

Mrs. Wilson of New Mexico moves to recommit the bill, H.R. 2956, to the Committee on Armed Services with instructions to report the same back to the House forthwith with the following amendment:

Strike all after the enacting clause and insert the following:

SEC. 1. ELECTRONIC SURVEILLANCE.

Section 101(f) of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act of 1978 (50 U.S.C. 1801(f)) is amended to read as follows:

''(f) 'Electronic surveillance' means—

''(1) the installation or use of an electronic, mechanical, or other surveillance device for acquiring information by intentionally directing surveillance at a particular known person who is reasonably believed to be in the United States under circumstances in which that person has a reasonable expectation of privacy and a warrant would be required for law enforcement purposes; or

''(2) the intentional acquisition of the contents of any communication under circumstances in which a person has a reasonable expectation of privacy and a warrant would be required for law enforcement purposes, if both the sender and all intended recipients are reasonably believed to be located within the United States.''.

□ 1730

The SPEAKER pro tempore. For what purpose does the gentleman from Missouri rise?

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I have just received the motion just a few moments ago, and I reserve a point of order against the motion now pending.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. A point of order is reserved.

Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from New Mexico is recognized for 5 minutes in support of her motion.

Mrs. WILSON of New Mexico. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

POINT OF ORDER

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, let me make the official point of order, if I may.

Mrs. WILSON of New Mexico. Parliamentary inquiry, Mr. Speaker. Parliamentary inquiry, Mr. Speaker.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Missouri is recognized. He has the right to insist upon the point of order.

Mr. SKELTON. I do insist on it as of this moment, Mr. Speaker.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY

Mrs. WILSON of New Mexico. Parliamentary inquiry, Mr. Speaker.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. For what purpose does the gentlewoman from New Mexico rise?

Mrs. WILSON of New Mexico. Mr. Speaker, was I not recognized to explain my motion to recommit?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman raised a point of order, and he had a right to insist upon the point of order, which he so put to the Chair.

Mrs. WILSON of New Mexico. May I speak on the point of order, Mr. Speaker?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. At the appropriate time.

The gentleman from Missouri.

POINT OF ORDER

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I raise the point of order that the motion to recommit that was just handed to me moments ago, a motion to recommit with instructions, relates to electronic surveillance and is not germane to the bill in front of us, which deals with Iraq, and I claim the point of order that it is not germane and should be stricken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Does any other Member wish to be heard on the point of order?

Mrs. WILSON of New Mexico. Mr. Speaker, I wish to be heard on the point of order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentlewoman from New Mexico is recognized.

Mrs. WILSON of New Mexico. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This motion to recommit would do one very simple and vital thing that is critical to the security of this country, more critical than the underlying resolution itself, and I am begging you and pleading with you to take up this issue.

The motion to recommit would do a very simple thing. It would say that the United States can listen to phone conversations of terrorists overseas without a warrant. Why does that matter? It matters because intelligence is the first line of defense in the war on terror, and we are now knowingly operating with our fingers in our ears and our hands over our eyes.

Recent testimony in front of this Congress by Director McConnell——

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentlewoman will suspend.

The gentleman from Missouri.

Mr. SKELTON. The gentlelady is not addressing the point of order. She's giving a closing argument. I urge the Chair to rule that she must confine her remarks to the point of order that I have raised.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman is correct.

The Chair reminds the gentlewoman that debate on the point of order must address the point of order and only the point of order.

The gentlewoman from New Mexico.

Mrs. WILSON of New Mexico. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am addressing the point of order and why it is germane, and I think that that's important for this House to understand, and I will continue with my explanation.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentlewoman may continue provided the remarks are confined to the point of order.

Mrs. WILSON of New Mexico. My remarks will be confined to the importance of the point of order and its germaneness.

Director of National Intelligence McConnell recently said in testimony to this House that we are actually missing a significant portion of what we should be getting. That is true not only in Iraq and Afghanistan but for the war on terror in its whole.

This is critical to the security of this country.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentlewoman will suspend.

For what purpose does the gentleman from Missouri rise?

Mr. SKELTON. I urge the Speaker to have the lady confine her remarks to the point of order that is pending before the House.

Mrs. WILSON of New Mexico. Mr. Speaker.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentlewoman from New Mexico is once again reminded that the remarks on the point of order must be confined to the point of order.

Mrs. WILSON of New Mexico. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That is what I am attempting to do.

The question in the point of order has to do with germaneness and the relevance of my motion to recommit to the underlying bill with respect to the Iraq resolution. That is what I'm trying to explain to the House. If my colleague from Missouri would give me a little latitude, I will continue to explain.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Missouri is right. The gentlewoman's remarks are not confined to the point of order at issue before this House.

The gentlewoman may address the point of order.

Mrs. WILSON of New Mexico. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We have a responsibility in this House to do things that matter, the things that are in our lap and our responsibility. There is something squarely in the lap of this House, and it

is our responsibility to deal with the national security matters at hand.

We all remember where we were on the morning of 9/11 and what we were doing, who we were with.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentlewoman will suspend.

For what purpose does the gentleman from Missouri rise?

Mr. SKELTON. I, again, urge the Chair to request the gentlelady to address the point of order, that this is not germane to the bill regarding Iraq that is before us.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman's point is taken.

The gentlewoman is once again advised that the remarks on the point of order must confine themselves closely to the point of order. If not, the Chair will recognize other Members to speak on a point of order. If no others seek recognition, the Chair will rule.

Does the gentlewoman from New Mexico wish to proceed?

Mrs. WILSON of New Mexico. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would wish to proceed.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentlewoman is recognized.

Mrs. WILSON of New Mexico. The question of germaneness is very important here. The reality is that this underlying bill deals with an issue of national security vital to this country, and the most important vital issue that this body must deal with today is to make sure we have the ability to listen to our enemies. That is the first line of defense in the war on terror, and that is what we are willfully ignoring.

I would urge my colleagues to vote for the motion to recommit, and if this point of order is sustained, I would ask my colleagues to vote to challenge the ruling of the Chair.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I respectfully request a ruling on my point of order on the motion to recommit.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Does any Member wish to speak on the point of order? If no other Member wishes to address the point of order, the Chair is prepared to rule.

The gentleman makes a point of order that the instructions contained in the motion to recommit offered by the gentlewoman from New Mexico are not germane.

Clause 7 of rule XVI, the germaneness rule, provides that no proposition on a ''subject different from that under consideration shall be admitted under color of amendment.''

One of the central tenets of the germaneness rule is that an amendment should be within the jurisdiction of the committees whose jurisdiction is reflected in the bill.

The bill, H.R. 2956, was referred to the Committees on Armed Services and Foreign Affairs.

The instructions in the motion to recommit offered by the gentlewoman from New Mexico address the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act of 1978, a law within the jurisdictions of the Committee on the Judiciary and the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence.

Because they address a matter outside the jurisdictions broached by the bill, the instructions in the motion to recommit are not germane.

The point of order is sustained. The motion is not in order.

Mrs. WILSON of New Mexico. Mr. Speaker, I move to appeal the ruling of the Chair.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is, shall the decision of the Chair stand as the judgment of the House?

MOTION TO TABLE OFFERED BY MR. SKELTON

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I move to table the motion.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion to table.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mrs. WILSON of New Mexico. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 9 of rule XX, this 15-minute vote on the motion to lay the appeal on the table will be followed by a 5-minute vote on the question of passage, if arising without further debate or proceedings in recommittal.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 224, nays 197, not voting 10, as follows:

[Roll No. 623]

YEAS—224

Abercrombie
Ackerman
Allen
Altmire
Andrews
Arcuri
Baca
Baird
Baldwin
Barrow
Bean
Becerra
Berman
Berry
Bishop (GA)
Bishop (NY)
Blumenauer
Boren
Boswell
Boucher
Boyd (FL)
Boyda (KS)
Brady (PA)
Braley (IA)
Brown, Corrine
Butterfield
Capps
Capuano
Cardoza
Carnahan
Carson
Castor
Chandler
Clarke
Clay
Cleaver
Clyburn
Cohen
Cooper
Costa
Costello
Courtney
Cramer
Crowley
Cuellar
Cummings
Davis (AL)
Davis (CA)
Davis, Lincoln
DeFazio
DeGette
Delahunt
DeLauro
Dicks
Dingell
Doggett
Donnelly
Doyle
Edwards
Ellison
Ellsworth
Emanuel
Engel
Eshoo
Etheridge
Farr
Fattah
Filner
Frank (MA)
Giffords
Gillibrand
Gonzalez
Gordon
Green, Al
Green, Gene
Grijalva
Gutierrez
Hall (NY)
Hare
Harman
Hastings (FL)
Herseth Sandlin
Higgins
Hill
Hinchey
Hinojosa
Hirono
Hodes
Holden
Holt
Honda
Hooley
Hoyer
Inslee
Israel
Jackson (IL)
Jackson-Lee (TX)
Jefferson
Johnson (GA)
Johnson, E. B.
Jones (OH)
Kagen
Kanjorski
Kaptur
Kennedy
Kildee
Kilpatrick
Kind
Klein (FL)
Kucinich
Lampson
Langevin
Lantos
Larsen (WA)
Larson (CT)
Lee
Levin
Lewis (GA)
Lipinski
Loebsack
Lofgren, Zoe
Lynch
Mahoney (FL)
Maloney (NY)
Markey
Matheson
Matsui
McCarthy (NY)
McCollum (MN)
McDermott
McGovern
McIntyre
McNerney
McNulty
Meek (FL)
Meeks (NY)
Melancon
Michaud
Miller (NC)
Miller, George
Mitchell
Mollohan
Moore (KS)
Moore (WI)
Moran (VA)
Murphy (CT)
Murphy, Patrick
Murtha
Nadler
Napolitano
Neal (MA)
Oberstar
Obey
Olver
Ortiz
Pallone
Pascrell
Pastor
Payne
Perlmutter
Peterson (MN)
Pomeroy
Price (NC)
Rahall
Rangel
Reyes
Rodriguez
Ross
Rothman
Roybal-Allard
Ruppersberger
Rush
Ryan (OH)
Salazar
Sánchez, Linda T.
Sanchez, Loretta
Sarbanes
Schakowsky
Schiff
Schwartz
Scott (GA)
Scott (VA)
Serrano
Sestak
Shea-Porter
Sherman
Shuler
Sires
Skelton
Slaughter
Smith (WA)
Snyder
Solis
Space
Spratt
Stark
Stupak
Sutton
Tanner
Tauscher
Taylor
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Tierney
Towns
Udall (CO)
Udall (NM)
Van Hollen
Velázquez
Visclosky
Walz (MN)
Wasserman Schultz
Waters
Watson
Watt
Waxman
Weiner
Welch (VT)
Wexler
Wilson (OH)
Woolsey
Wu
Wynn
Yarmuth

NAYS—197

Aderholt
Akin
Alexander
Bachmann
Bachus
Baker
Barrett (SC)
Bartlett (MD)
Barton (TX)
Biggert
Bilbray
Bilirakis
Bishop (UT)
Blackburn
Blunt
Boehner
Bonner
Bono
Boozman
Boustany
Brady (TX)
Brown (SC)
Brown-Waite, Ginny
Buchanan
Burgess
Burton (IN)
Buyer
Calvert
Camp (MI)
Campbell (CA)
Cannon
Cantor
Capito
Carney
Carter
Castle
Chabot
Coble
Cole (OK)
Conaway
Crenshaw
Culberson
Davis (KY)
Davis, David
Davis, Tom
Deal (GA)
Dent
Diaz-Balart, L.
Diaz-Balart, M.
Doolittle
Drake
Dreier
Duncan
Ehlers
Emerson
English (PA)
Everett
Fallin
Feeney
Ferguson
Flake
Forbes
Fortenberry
Fossella
Foxx
Franks (AZ)
Frelinghuysen
Gallegly
Garrett (NJ)
Gerlach
Gilchrest
Gillmor
Gingrey
Gohmert
Goode
Goodlatte
Granger
Graves
Hall (TX)
Hastert
Hastings (WA)
Hayes
Heller
Hensarling
Herger
Hobson
Hoekstra
Hulshof
Hunter
Inglis (SC)
Issa
Johnson (IL)
Johnson, Sam
Jones (NC)
Jordan
Keller
King (IA)
King (NY)
Kingston
Kirk
Kline (MN)
Knollenberg
Kuhl (NY)
LaHood
Lamborn
Latham
LaTourette
Lewis (CA)
Lewis (KY)
Linder
LoBiondo
Lucas
Lungren, Daniel E.
Mack
Manzullo
Marchant
Marshall
McCarthy (CA)
McCaul (TX)
McCotter
McCrery
McHenry
McHugh
McKeon
McMorris Rodgers
Mica
Miller (FL)
Miller (MI)
Miller, Gary
Moran (KS)
Murphy, Tim
Musgrave
Myrick
Neugebauer
Nunes
Pearce
Pence
Peterson (PA)
Petri
Pickering
Pitts
Platts
Poe
Porter
Price (GA)
Pryce (OH)
Putnam
Radanovich
Ramstad
Regula
Rehberg
Reichert
Renzi
Reynolds
Rogers (AL)
Rogers (KY)
Rogers (MI)
Rohrabacher
Ros-Lehtinen
Roskam
Royce
Ryan (WI)
Sali
Saxton
Schmidt
Sensenbrenner
Sessions
Shadegg
Shays
Shimkus
Shuster
Simpson
Smith (NE)
Smith (NJ)
Smith (TX)
Souder
Stearns
Sullivan
Terry
Thornberry
Tiahrt
Tiberi
Turner
Upton
Walberg
Walden (OR)
Walsh (NY)
Wamp
Weldon (FL)
Weller
Westmoreland
Whitfield
Wicker
Wilson (NM)
Wilson (SC)
Wolf
Young (FL)

NOT VOTING—10

Berkley
Conyers
Cubin
Davis (IL)
Davis, Jo Ann
Jindal
Lowey
Paul
Tancredo
Young (AK)

□ 1803

Messrs. TURNER, TOM DAVIS of Virginia, SHUSTER, Mrs. MYRICK, and Mr. TERRY changed their vote from ''yea'' to ''nay.''

Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California, and Messrs. ISRAEL, DINGELL, RUSH, and GORDON of Tennessee changed their vote from ''nay'' to ''yea.''

So the motion to table was agreed to.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the passage of the bill.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. This will be a 5-minute vote.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 223, nays 201, not voting 8, as follows:

[Roll No. 624]

YEAS—223

Abercrombie
Ackerman
Allen
Altmire
Andrews
Arcuri
Baca
Baird
Baldwin
Bean
Becerra
Berman
Berry
Bishop (GA)
Bishop (NY)
Blumenauer
Boswell
Boucher
Boyd (FL)
Boyda (KS)
Brady (PA)
Braley (IA)
Brown, Corrine
Butterfield
Capps
Capuano
Cardoza
Carnahan
Carson
Castor
Chandler
Clarke
Clay
Cleaver
Clyburn
Cohen
Cooper
Costa
Costello
Courtney
Cramer
Crowley
Cuellar
Cummings
Davis (AL)
Davis (CA)
Davis (IL)
Davis, Lincoln
DeFazio
DeGette
Delahunt
DeLauro
Dicks
Dingell
Doggett
Donnelly
Doyle
Duncan
Edwards
Ellison
Emanuel
Emerson
Engel
Eshoo
Etheridge
Farr
Fattah
Filner
Frank (MA)
Giffords
Gilchrest
Gillibrand
Gonzalez
Gordon
Green, Al
Green, Gene
Grijalva
Gutierrez
Hall (NY)
Hare
Harman
Hastings (FL)
Herseth Sandlin
Higgins
Hill
Hinchey
Hinojosa
Hirono
Hodes
Holt
Honda
Hooley
Hoyer
Inslee
Israel
Jackson (IL)
Jackson-Lee (TX)
Jefferson
Johnson (GA)
Johnson, E. B.
Jones (NC)
Jones (OH)
Kagen
Kanjorski
Kaptur
Kennedy
Kildee
Kilpatrick
Kind
Klein (FL)
Lampson
Langevin
Lantos
Larsen (WA)
Larson (CT)
Lee
Levin
Lewis (GA)
Lipinski
Loebsack
Lofgren, Zoe
Lowey
Lynch
Mahoney (FL)
Maloney (NY)
Markey
Matsui
McCarthy (NY)
McCollum (MN)
McDermott
McGovern
McIntyre
McNerney
McNulty
Meek (FL)
Meeks (NY)
Melancon
Michaud
Miller (NC)
Miller, George
Mitchell
Mollohan
Moore (KS)
Moore (WI)
Moran (VA)
Murphy (CT)
Murphy, Patrick
Murtha
Nadler
Napolitano
Neal (MA)
Oberstar
Obey
Olver
Ortiz
Pallone
Pascrell
Pastor
Payne
Pelosi
Perlmutter
Peterson (MN)
Pomeroy
Price (NC)
Rahall
Rangel
Reyes
Rodriguez
Ross
Rothman
Roybal-Allard
Ruppersberger
Rush
Ryan (OH)
Salazar
Sánchez, Linda T.
Sanchez, Loretta
Sarbanes
Schakowsky
Schiff
Schwartz
Scott (GA)
Scott (VA)
Serrano
Sestak
Shea-Porter
Sherman
Shuler
Sires
Skelton
Slaughter
Smith (WA)
Solis
Space
Spratt
Stark
Stupak
Sutton
Tanner
Tauscher
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Tierney
Towns
Udall (CO)
Udall (NM)
Van Hollen
Velázquez
Visclosky
Walz (MN)
Wasserman Schultz
Waters
Watson
Watt
Waxman
Weiner
Welch (VT)
Wexler
Wilson (OH)
Woolsey
Wu
Wynn
Yarmuth

NAYS—201

Aderholt
Akin
Alexander
Bachmann
Bachus
Baker
Barrett (SC)
Barrow
Bartlett (MD)
Barton (TX)
Biggert
Bilbray
Bilirakis
Bishop (UT)
Blackburn
Blunt
Boehner
Bonner
Bono
Boozman
Boren
Boustany
Brady (TX)
Brown (SC)
Brown-Waite, Ginny
Buchanan
Burgess
Burton (IN)
Buyer
Calvert
Camp (MI)
Campbell (CA)
Cannon
Cantor
Capito
Carney
Carter
Castle
Chabot
Coble
Cole (OK)
Conaway
Crenshaw
Culberson
Davis (KY)
Davis, David
Davis, Tom
Deal (GA)
Dent
Diaz-Balart, L.
Diaz-Balart, M.
Doolittle
Drake
Dreier
Ehlers
Ellsworth
English (PA)
Everett
Fallin
Feeney
Ferguson
Flake
Forbes
Fortenberry
Fossella
Foxx
Franks (AZ)
Frelinghuysen
Gallegly
Garrett (NJ)
Gerlach
Gillmor
Gingrey
Gohmert
Goode
Goodlatte
Granger
Graves
Hall (TX)
Hastert
Hastings (WA)
Hayes
Heller
Hensarling
Herger
Hobson
Hoekstra
Holden
Hulshof
Hunter
Inglis (SC)
Issa
Johnson (IL)
Johnson, Sam
Jordan
Keller
King (IA)
King (NY)
Kingston
Kirk
Kline (MN)
Knollenberg
Kucinich
Kuhl (NY)
LaHood
Lamborn
Latham
LaTourette
Lewis (CA)
Lewis (KY)
Linder
LoBiondo
Lucas
Lungren, Daniel E.
Mack
Manzullo
Marchant
Marshall
Matheson
McCarthy (CA)
McCaul (TX)
McCotter
McCrery
McHenry
McHugh
McKeon
McMorris Rodgers
Mica
Miller (FL)
Miller (MI)
Miller, Gary
Moran (KS)
Murphy, Tim
Musgrave
Myrick
Neugebauer
Nunes
Pearce
Pence
Peterson (PA)
Petri
Pickering
Pitts
Platts
Poe
Porter
Price (GA)
Pryce (OH)
Putnam
Radanovich
Ramstad
Regula
Rehberg
Reichert
Renzi
Reynolds
Rogers (AL)
Rogers (KY)
Rogers (MI)
Rohrabacher
Ros-Lehtinen
Roskam
Royce
Ryan (WI)
Sali
Saxton
Schmidt
Sensenbrenner
Sessions
Shadegg
Shays
Shimkus
Shuster
Simpson
Smith (NE)
Smith (NJ)
Smith (TX)
Snyder
Souder
Stearns
Sullivan
Taylor
Terry
Thornberry
Tiahrt
Tiberi
Turner
Upton
Walberg
Walden (OR)
Walsh (NY)
Wamp
Weldon (FL)
Weller
Westmoreland
Whitfield
Wicker
Wilson (NM)
Wilson (SC)
Wolf
Young (FL)

NOT VOTING—8

Berkley
Conyers
Cubin
Davis, Jo Ann
Jindal
Paul
Tancredo
Young (AK)

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (during the vote). Members are advised that 2 minutes remain in this vote.

□ 1813

So the bill was passed.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

RESIGNATION AS MEMBER OF COMMITTEE ON THE BUDGET

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WEINER) laid before the House the following resignation as a member of the Committee on the Budget:

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, July 12, 2007.

Speaker NANCY PELOSI,
Office of the Speaker,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MADAM SPEAKER: I am writing to officially announce my resignation on this date, Thursday, July 12, 2007, from the House Committee on the Budget, where it has been a true honor to serve.

If there are any questions, please do not hesitate to call me.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

BETTY SUTTON,
Member of Congress.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the resignation is accepted.

There was no objection.

ELECTION OF MEMBER TO COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

Mr. BECERRA. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Democratic Caucus, I offer a privileged resolution (H. Res. 540) and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 540

Resolved, That the following named Member be and is hereby elected to the following standing committee of the House of Representatives:

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY.—Ms. Sutton (to rank immediately after Mr. Johnson of Georgia).

The resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

□ 1815

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 1851, SECTION 8 VOUCHER REFORM ACT OF 2007

Ms. CASTOR. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 534 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 534

Resolved, That at any time after the adoption of this resolution the Speaker may, pursuant to clause 2(b) of rule XVIII, declare the House resolved into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for

consideration of the bill (H.R. 1851) to reform the housing choice voucher program under section 8 of the United States Housing Act of 1937. The first reading of the bill shall be dispensed with. All points of order against consideration of the bill are waived except those arising under clause 9 or 10 of rule XXI. General debate shall be confined to the bill and shall not exceed one hour equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Financial Services. After general debate the bill shall be considered for amendment under the five-minute rule. It shall be in order to consider as an original bill for the purpose of amendment under the five-minute rule the amendment in the nature of a substitute recommended by the Committee on Financial Services now printed in the bill. The committee amendment in the nature of a substitute shall be considered as read. All points of order against the committee amendment in the nature of a substitute are waived except those arising under clause 10 of rule XXI. Notwithstanding clause 11 of rule XVIII, no amendment to the committee amendment in the nature of a substitute shall be in order except those printed in the report of the Committee on Rules accompanying this resolution. Each such amendment may be offered only in the order printed in the report, may be offered only by a Member designated in the report, shall be considered as read, shall be debatable for the time specified in the report equally divided and controlled by the proponent and an opponent, shall not be subject to amendment, and shall not be subject to a demand for division of the question in the House or in the Committee of the Whole. All points of order against such amendments are waived except those arising under clause 9 or 10 of rule XXI. At the conclusion of consideration of the bill for amendment the Committee shall rise and report the bill to the House with such amendments as may have been adopted. Any Member may demand a separate vote in the House on any amendment adopted in the Committee of the Whole to the bill or to the committee amendment in the nature of a substitute. The previous question shall be considered as ordered on the bill and amendments thereto to final passage without intervening motion except one motion to recommit with or without instructions.

SEC. 2. During consideration in the House of H.R. 1851 pursuant to this resolution, notwithstanding the operation of the previous question, the Chair may postpone further consideration of the bill to such time as may be designated by the Speaker.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. CASTOR) is recognized for 1 hour.

Ms. CASTOR. Mr. Speaker, for the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentleman from Florida, my colleague, Mr. DIAZ-BALART. All time yielded during consideration of the rule is for debate only, and I yield myself such time as I may consume.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. CASTOR. I also ask unanimous consent that all Members be given 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks on House Resolution 534.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Florida?

There was no objection.

Ms. CASTOR. Mr. Speaker, House Resolution 534 provides for consideration of H.R. 1851, the Section 8 Voucher Reform Act of 2007, under a structured rule. The rule provides 1 hour of general debate, equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Financial Services.

The rule makes in order the Financial Services substitute as an original bill for the purpose of amendment.

The rule also makes in order six amendments printed in the Rules Committee report. Each amendment is debatable for 10 minutes.

Mr. Speaker, many American families are facing a critical housing crunch. The cost of an apartment or home is rising out of sight. But there is good news from a majority of this Congress that keeps fighting for a new direction for America. The reform provided today through H.R. 1851, under this rule, which has bipartisan support, will help families in need of affordable housing.

I would like to thank Housing and Community Development Subcommittee Chair MAXINE WATERS, and Financial Services Chair BARNEY FRANK for their leadership in housing and commitment to our Nation's families.

Our actions today are needed because, over the past few years, the Bush administration has caused great frustration when it comes to housing. The White House eliminated housing opportunities for approximately 150,000 families under a major section 8 funding formula change.

The White House refused to release about $1.4 billion in unused voucher funds for affordable housing. So, Mr. Speaker, instead of homes for many families in need, thousands of families have been placed on waiting lists.

In my hometown of Tampa, Florida, during a 1-week open enrollment session, more than 10,000 seniors, families and veterans indicated a need for housing. But, instead of receiving housing, they were placed on a waiting list. The waiting list takes up to 4 years, and is so long that the Tampa Housing Authority is unable to help others that need it.

Even with this reform bill, Mr. Speaker, the final fair market value rents are in need of adjustment. It's ridiculous and completely unreasonable for HUD to believe that a 3-bedroom apartment in the Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater area is available for just over $1,000. The truth is, those affordable homes and apartments are few and far between, and this must be fixed.

Nevertheless, H.R. 1851 takes positive steps to ensure that more families are able to find a clean, safe, stable and affordable place to live. Through the major reforms contained in the bill, we are going to increase the number of families that can receive housing over the next 5 years.

We will simplify the rules and procedures used to establish rents for section 8 and provide housing. We're going to reduce the bureaucracy and red tape for our public housing authorities so they can concentrate on assisting the elderly, the physically challenged and other struggling families.

We're going to provide incentives for families to become more self-sufficient by obtaining employment, increasing their incomes, pursuing higher education and planning for retirement. These families will also be able to use section 8 vouchers for a down payment on the American dream of home ownership. We will continue to fight to keep families safe and protected in an affordable, clean and safe home.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to support this bill. And the Congress should be eager to pass this reform.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank my friend, the distinguished gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. CASTOR) for the time, and I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Today, the Housing Choice Voucher Program, more commonly known as section 8, helps provide housing assistance to around 2 million low-income families and individuals each year. The program began in 1974, primarily as a project-based rental assistance program. By the next decade, it had become evident that the project-based model was too costly and concentrated families in high poverty areas, thereby making it harder to break the cycle of poverty.

In 1983, Congress stopped providing project-based section 8 contracts and created vouchers as a replacement. The voucher program allows families with a voucher to find and lease a unit in the private sector, instead of being limited to certain section 8 housing complexes. Recipients pay a portion of their rent, based on their income, while the voucher covers the remaining portion of the rent.

In 1998, the program consumed 42 percent of HUD's annual budget. By 2005, it had grown to over 62 percent of HUD's budget. If the growth in the program is not addressed and reformed, we could face a situation where deserving low-income families would be unable to receive any assistance.

The underlying bill makes a number of improvements to the section 8 program to reform and simplify regulations of local public housing agencies, while preserving essential tenant protection. H.R. 1851 aims to simplify rent calculation and inspection requirements for section 8 vouchers, project-based assistance and public housing, and to promote self sufficiency on the part of assisted families through work incentives and home ownership opportunities.

This bill can make good changes to the section 8 voucher program. The funding allocation formula included in the bill codifies the formula change made in the continuing resolution,

February 2007. It uses the public housing agencies' vouchers costs and utilization rates from the last 12 months, instead of the 2004 numbers for a quarter of that year.

Under current law, HUD is required to recapture the amount in excess of each public housing agency's reserve limits, funds that are left over after the renewal of vouchers. If the PHA does not use all the money that the government has authorized, then the government reallocates those funds to another PHA the following year.

The community that I'm honored to represent has lost millions of dollars to other public housing agencies under the change in law made by this Congress. The current funding formula neglects the coverage costs of litigation issues or weather damage, of living facilities which were financed by the excess funds.

The manager's amendment, Mr. Speaker, which will be debated later today, will allow public housing agencies to retain, to keep 12.5 percent of their reserve funds during the first year of the formula change. After the transition, PHAs will remain with 5 percent of their reserve funds in a given year. The manager's amendment aims to somewhat compensate for losses faced by public housing agencies such as those in my community.

I commend the Financial Services Committee, its chairman and ranking member, and all of its members, for working in a bipartisan manner to make improvements to the section 8 program. I look forward to the committee's continued efforts to improve the program, and to addressing the concerns I have mentioned with the funding formula.

Mr. Speaker, unlike the bipartisan nature with which and under which the Financial Services Committee has worked this bill, the majority in the Rules Committee failed to live up to that same standard. There were 23 amendments submitted to the Rules Committee for consideration. The majority on the Rules Committee made only six amendments in order. Yes, half of them, a whopping three, were Republican amendments, but there were 12 Republican amendments that had been submitted.

During consideration of this rule, the minority made attempts to make several other Republican amendments in order, but the majority blocked each amendment by party line vote. That's quite a contrast to how the Financial Services Committee has worked.

My colleague on the Rules Committee from Texas, Mr. SESSIONS, also offered an amendment to the rule that would have made this an open rule, Mr. Speaker. The majority on the Rules Committee blocked our efforts for an open rule. This is contrary to how the majority promised to run the House of Representatives, and it is most unfortunate.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. CASTOR. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to yield 5 minutes to the distinguished chair of the Financial Services Committee, Mr. FRANK.

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman. I thank my colleague from Florida for the generous words about the procedure. There were some differences between us on the parties on this, but in general, this represents a consensus.

And, Mr. Speaker, I want to give credit where credit is due. This is a result of a process that was begun by our former colleague from Ohio, Mr. NEY.

□ 1830

He convened when he was Chair of the Housing Subcommittee a set of roundtable discussions with participation from HUD, from tenant groups, from landlord groups that participate, and from others. And much of what is in this bill came out of the sessions that he and his then ranking member, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATERS), now the Chair of the subcommittee, did.

So as is always the case in a parliamentary body, we will, as is appropriate, focus to some extent on some differences. And there are several amendments that will present sharp differences, but people ought to keep in mind that it is in the context of a great deal of agreement.

In addition to the agreements already there, I have had conversations with several of the Republican Members, the gentleman from California (Mr. GARY G. MILLER); the gentleman from California (Mr. CAMPBELL); the ranking member of the subcommittee, the gentlewoman from Illinois (Mrs. BIGGERT). We have some agreements about what we should be doing, how this should be interpreted, what we should be doing going further, and I look forward in the general debate to colloquies with all of them so that I think we can further solidify the agreements that we have going forward.

Now, as to the substance of the bill, the section 8 program is a very important one. Many of us believe that the problem has been not with the section 8 program but that it stood alone, that it was not accompanied by programs that would build housing. And in other pieces of legislation that have come out of the Financial Services Committee, some of which have come to the floor, some of which are about to come to the floor, we are going to try to add a supply side, if I may borrow the phrase, to the demand side.

We have a program here which increases the demand for housing by putting money in the hands of people who otherwise would not be able to afford decent housing. But if all you do is that and you don't also help build housing, you can have an adverse impact on price. So we hope to be able to balance it, but that is not the fault of this program.

What this bill does is to make it more flexible. It has much in there that HUD agrees with; although, again, I don't claim that everybody agrees with everything. An indication of the extent to which this simply improves the program, I will include in the RECORD several letters on this subject. One letter comes from those who are the landlords, who rent.

And, by the way, we are not automatically doing them a favor. In a tight rental market, as we have in many parts of this country, it is a good thing for the public purpose that landlords are willing to participate. Many of these landlords, they don't have to be in the section 8 program, so we try to reach out to them. And here is a letter endorsing the bill from the Association of Homes and Services for the Aging, the Institute of Real Estate Management, the National Affordable Housing Management Association, the National Apartment Association, the National Association of Home Builders, the National Leased Housing Association, and the National Multi Housing Council.

We also have strong support from those in the public sector at the local level who administer this: the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials and the Council of Large Public Housing Agencies. And then we have also a letter from a large coalition of advocacy groups, of religious groups that are in the business of building the housing. There is a very broad degree of support for this bill.

I understand there are a couple of points of difference, and I realize, too, there are some points of difference that couldn't have been presented. I would have liked them to be. But I think that the three amendments that are in order on the Republican side do present some of the most important differences.

I should note, by the way, that while three amendments reflect the disagreement that many in the minority have with the bill, two of the other amendments are really bipartisan. The manager's amendment is an amendment in which the gentleman from Illinois and the gentlewoman from California collaborated.

So the manager's amendment, one of the six amendments, it is designated as the Waters amendment, but it is very bipartisan. And the second one that is bipartisan is an amendment that deals with situations that threaten the ability of people to stay in affordable housing in the district my colleague from Massachusetts (Mr. MARKEY) and our colleague from the committee from Ohio (Ms. PRYCE).

So we have two amendments which are completely bipartisan. We have those three. And then the one that the gentlewoman from New York will offer on domestic violence, which I don't think is terribly controversial.

So I understand that we haven't resolved all the differences. I do think that, and let me put it this way, of all the housing bills that have come to the floor from this committee, this is the

least controversial. I don't want anyone to get bored. When we come back in early September, we can fight again. But I do think on this one, while there will be some disagreements, what we reflect is a basic consensus on how to improve an important social program that, as I said, began under Republican leadership in the last Congress and we have largely continued the process.

I thank the gentlewoman for yielding.

JULY 12, 2007.

DEAR CHAIRMAN FRANK AND RANKING MEMBER BACHUS: We are writing to lend our strong support for H.R. 1851, the Section 8 Voucher Reform Act of 2007 (SEVRA), which is scheduled to be debated in the House today. We represent a diverse array of constituencies—ranging from housing providers to tenants to apartment owners to membership organizations to religious leaders—who all agree that this is a very strong piece of legislation.

Simply put, SEVRA is a good government bill. It stabilizes the voucher program with a permanent funding policy, while simplifying the rules about how to calculate tenant rents and streamlining the housing inspection process. As a result, the voucher program will run more efficiently, tenants will be rewarded when they increase their work effort, and there will be less unnecessary paperwork for all parties involved—housing authorities, tenants, and property owners.

The voucher program is our nation's leading source of housing assistance for low-income people. It serves nearly two million families with children, elderly people, and people with disabilities. Making sure that it operates as effectively as possible is in their interest as well as in our national interest.

We give this bill our strong endorsement so it can continue through the legislative process and be enacted this year.

Sincerely,

AARP, American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging (AAHSA), American Network of Community Options and Resources, Association of Jewish Family & Children's Agencies (AJFCA), The Arc of the United States, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP), Coalition on Human Needs (CRN), Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities Housing Task Force, Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH), Easter Seals.

Enterprise Community Partners, Housing Assistance Council (HAC), Institute of Real Estate Management, Jewish Council for Public Affairs, Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), Lutheran Services in America, National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd, National Affordable Housing Management Association (NAHMA).

National AIDS Housing Coalition, National Alliance of HUD Tenants, National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), National Alliance to End Homelessness, National Apartment Association, National Association of Home Builders, National Association of Housing Co-ops, National Association of Realtors, National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors, National Coalition for Asian Pacific American Community Development.

National Council of State Housing Agencies (NCSHA), National Housing Conference, National Housing Trust, National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty, National Leased Housing Association, National Low Income Housing Coalition, National Multi Housing Council, National People's Action (NPA), National Training and Information Center (NTIC), NETWORK, a National Catholic Social Justice Lobby.

Poverty & Race Research Action Council (PRRAC), Presbyterian Church (USA) Washington Office, Public Housing Authorities Directors Association (PHADA), Public Justice Center, The United Methodist Church—General Board of Church and Society, Travelers Aid International, United Cerebral Palsy, United Jewish Communities (UJC).

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF HOUSING AND REDEVELOPMENT OFFICIALS,
Washington, DC, July 12, 2007.

Hon. BARNEY FRANK,
Chairman, Committee on Financial Services, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

Hon. MAXINE WATERS,
Chairwoman, Subcommittee on Housing and Community Opportunity, Committee on Financial Services, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

Hon. SPENCER BACHUS,
Ranking Member, Committee on Financial Services, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

Hon. JUDY BIGGERT,
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Housing and Community Opportunity, House Committee on Financial Services, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN FRANK AND RANKING MEMBER BACHUS: On behalf of the board and members of the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO), I am writing in regard to your consideration of H.R. 1851, the Section 8 Voucher Reform Act of 2007 (SEVRA). As passed by the House Financial Services Committee and improved by the proposed Managers' Amendment, NAHRO supports the passage of H.R. 1851.

NAHRO applauds the co-sponsors of H.R. 1851 and the Financial Services Committee as a whole for bringing this important and necessary piece of legislation to the floor for consideration by the full House of Representatives. We also applaud the bipartisan spirit with which this bill has been developed over many months of informed and responsible debate. The provisions now embedded in SEVRA, as passed by the Committee and improved by the Managers' Amendment, will enhance and strengthen the quality and administration of the Section 8 voucher program in responsible and tangible ways.

Most importantly, SEVRA stabilizes the Section 8 voucher program, the administration of which, starting in 2004 under HUD's PIH Notice 2004–7, has been negatively impacted by virtue of a funding distribution formula that has taken appropriated dollars and dispersed them across diverse housing markets without regard to the number of families leased or current voucher costs in each community. The budget-based/block grant-oriented voucher distribution formula in place from FY 2004–FY 2006 has funded some communities over their authorized voucher level, while dramatically underfunding others. As a direct result of this voucher funding formula, at least 150,000 authorized vouchers have been lost nationwide to low-income households who could have otherwise leased or purchased housing under the program. The funding formula in H.R. 1851, which builds on the prior calendar year funding formula enacted in the FY 2007 Continuing Resolution (PL. 110–5), further corrects this situation and, more significantly, will over time help restore nationwide leasing levels to their historic high pre-FY 2004 thresholds.

There are several additional items included in H.R. 1851 that represent important and positive steps forward in the administration of the Section 8 voucher program. These include:

HAP Funding Policies: In order to adjust to the change in funding formula as noted above, SEVRA contains provisions that create an important transitional mechanism. The bill's transitional mechanism would allow public housing agencies, for a period of time and subject to certain limits, to retain and use their unobligated fund balances. This is particularly important in light of HUD's delayed implementation of agencies' FY 2007 funding amounts.

Administrative Fees: We support the restoration of the post-QHWRA administrative fee structure and rates with improved inflation factors, special fees, fees for each issued voucher, and equitable fees under the Project-Based Voucher (PBV) assistance program for agency-owned units.

Annual Leasing: NAHRO supports the provision in SEVRA that will enable agencies to serve additional families with available funds, while still maintaining the voucher program's overall connection to authorized vouchers.

Housing Quality Inspections of Dwelling Units: NAHRO supports the provision in SEVRA that will allow housing agencies, at their discretion, to complete annual inspections of all their voucher assisted units every two years. This provision will reaffirm the discretionary authority of a local housing agency to perform annual inspections on a geographic basis rather than tying inspections to each household's lease anniversary. We also support the provision allowing housing agencies, at their discretion, to approve a dwelling unit in lieu of its own Housing Quality Standards (HQS) inspection when a comparable inspection is performed by other governmental entities. Finally, we support allowing housing agencies, at their discretion, to enable eligible voucher households to move into a unit and tender an initial subsidy payment, so long as an HQS inspection does not reveal that health or safety violations are present and repairs are made within 30 days.

In sum, H.R. 1851 improves important elements of both the Section 8 voucher and public housing programs. We again congratulate you on the steps you have taken thus far and look forward to continuing to work with you and your Senate colleagues to develop and pass a pragmatic and necessary piece of legislation that encourages the highest and best use of precious federal funds to help meet the well-documented need for decent, safe and affordable housing in our communities.

Sincerely,

SAUL N. RAMIREZ, Jr.

COUNCIL OF LARGE PUBLIC HOUSING AGENCIES,
Washington, DC, July 12, 2007.

Hon. BARNEY FRANK,
Chairman, Committee on Financial Services, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

Hon. MAXINE WATERS,
Chairwoman, Subcommittee on Housing and Community Opportunity, Committee on Financial Services, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

Hon. SPENCER BACHUS,

Ranking Member, Committee on Financial Services, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

Hon. JUDY BIGGERT, Ranking Member,
Subcommittee on Housing and Community Opportunity, Committee on Financial Services, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR MEMBERS OF CONGRESS: On behalf of the Council of Large Public Housing Authorities (CLPHA), I am writing in support of H.R. 1851, the Section 8 Voucher Reform Act of 2007 (SEVRA).

SEVRA makes significant changes to the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program and marks a significant step forward in simplifying the administration and funding of the program. Under your leadership, Congress has taken the initiative to reform this much needed program which provides housing assistance to two million of the lowest-income families. In addition to other changes important to CLPHA, SEVRA improves the current voucher funding formula, provides for rent simplification and flexibility, clarifies program eligibility, simplifies inspection requirements, and authorizes a funding reserve.

SEVRA is also critically important to CLPHA members and other public housing authorities across the nation for the expansion and far-reaching changes to the Housing Innovation Program (HIP), renamed from Moving to Work. We appreciate Congress making this program more broadly available to the many housing authorities interested in participating in the program.

While SEVRA is not perfect, the underlying bill is sound and we are pleased to offer our support. Again, we thank you for undertaking this initiative, and we look forward to working with you as the legislation continues to evolve and as it moves forward in the legislative process.

Sincerely,

SUNIA ZATERMAN,
Executive Director.

JULY 12, 2007.

Hon. BARNEY FRANK,
House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE FRANK: We are writing to encourage your support of H.R. 1851 when it goes to the floor. The ''Section 8 Voucher Reform Act of 2007'' provides important changes to a program that has served as the cornerstone of federal affordable housing policy for more than 30 years.

The undersigned groups worked with the Financial Services Committee to ensure that the legislation addresses issues fundamental to the continued success of the program, including a viable funding formula and important changes to streamline program operations.

H.R. 1851 also addresses several issues that are of particular interest to our organizations:

Provides that the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) will be required to translate both its own official vital documents as well as selected non-HUD property documents into any language the Department identifies as necessary, and provide a HUD-funded and HUD-administered 800 number for oral interpretation needs.

Amends the inspection timeframes for apartments that will be accepting voucher holders by eliminating unnecessary delays and duplication, thereby encouraging increased apartment owner participation.

Provides important changes to the project-based voucher program to ensure its flexibility as a tool for preserving or expanding the supply of apartments affordable to low-income families in many communities, particularly those with a tight housing market.

We are not able to support the Hensarling amendment as we have not had sufficient time to review the impact of such work requirements on all affected parties and request that it be withdrawn.

H.R. 1851 is expected to be on the House floor for a vote today, July 12. We urge your support of this important housing measure.

Sincerely,

American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging.
Institute of Real Estate Management.
National Affordable Housing Management Association.
National Apartment Association.
National Association of Home Builders.
National Leased Housing Association.
National Multi Housing Council.

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Speaker, at this time I yield 3 minutes to the distinguished gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE).

Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

I rise in opposition to the rule. It is not because of the final product, but the way in which the rule actually came about.

I have worked closely with the chairman of the Financial Services Committee, and I know that he is a fair individual, and actually in committee he supported several of my amendments and gave us the opportunity to have that vote be held.

It is no secret that we have an immigration crisis facing us in America. It is also no secret that Americans are angry. Like most Members, my office was flooded when the President and the Senate attempted to ram another amnesty immigration program down our throats.

According to a recent Rasmussen poll, 56 percent of Americans surveyed support an ''enforcement only'' approach to immigration reform and 44 percent of Americans opposed the Senate's amnesty plan.

Yesterday my colleagues and I offered several amendments that would bring accountability to the section 8 housing program under HUD. Not surprisingly, the majority broke their promise of openness in the House and yet again did not allow them to be considered by Members today.

Americans work hard for their money and Americans are also very generous. We are not afraid to help fellow Americans. A roof over your head is one of the most basic human needs, and we are not afraid to spend tax dollars to help those that cannot provide for themselves. But what Americans refuse to do is give up their hard-earned tax dollars to people who sneak into our country illegally. The funds included in this bill must, let me repeat that, must only go to those who are here legally working in this country and paying taxes.

However, the amendment my friend Mr. PRICE and I introduced would have ensured just that: Those receiving funds, taxpayer funds under section 8 are here in this country legally. Our amendment would have brought commonsense accountability to a program that clearly runs short of that right now. Yet the majority won't even allow Members to consider that amendment on the floor. What are they so afraid of?

It is not even a full year into the majority's new regime, and I am already tired, and so are my constituents, of broken promises. I know Americans are also. If other Members are tired, then they should join us in voting against this rule that blocks these commonsense amendments like those of my colleagues.

Ms. CASTOR. Mr. Speaker, at this time I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from Ohio, Mrs. TUBBS JONES.

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the gentlewoman for yielding time. I would like to thank the subcommittee Chair, MAXINE WATERS, for all her leadership and work on this; the Chair, Mr. FRANK; and my old colleague from Ohio, Bob Ney for the work.

I rise in support of H.R. 1851. In my district the problems with section 8 housing have bubbled to the surface, particularly in many of the inter-ring suburbs such as Bedford, Bedford Heights, Euclid, Cleveland Heights, and Shaker Heights. They have seen an increase in section 8 housing and are beginning to see a clash in culture between owners and renters, between those who have long time been owners and those who are new at renting property.

It is very important that when we start to look at some of the urban centers, some of the older housing, we start looking at the inter-ring suburbs with older housing, and even the newer suburban municipalities, that we have an opportunity to reform how we have section 8 housing and how it is used. The reform provisions in this bill will not only open access to low-income Americans to rent and even buy, it will provide incentives so that the program can truly serve its purpose of empowering people to become self-sufficient.

Certainly, as we have gone through this whole year or past 2 or 3 years where we have had predatory lenders preying upon our communities, we want to be able to give those new homeowners an opportunity to understand what homeownership means, to understand what kind of situation they could put themselves in without the necessary education. But as important to owning a home is the ability to have a decent job, to be well trained, to take care of your family, et cetera. And through the proposals that are set forth in this program, I believe we will have an opportunity to see that come to fruition.

This bill also includes a number of provisions designed to create other incentives.

I am so proud to have an opportunity to stand on the floor of the House saying that section 8 is going to be more than it has been in the past, that it will reach its true fruition.

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I yield 6 minutes

to the distinguished gentleman from Georgia (Mr. PRICE).

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I thank my good friend from Florida for his leadership on this issue and so many others.

I rise opposed to this rule for process and policy reasons.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, the new majority promised us and they promised the American people a fair and open process. But again, the majority has failed to live up to its promises, and now that it is out from under the spotlight of election-year promises, we see that they are few and far between.

Before last year's election, Speaker PELOSI said, ''Because the debate has been limited and Americans' voices silenced by this restrictive rule, I urge my colleagues to vote against the rule.''

And, Mr. Speaker, I agree. So what's changed? Is it political expediency or is it a broken promise?

In December following last year's election, the distinguished majority leader, Mr. HOYER, told the media that ''We intend to have a Rules Committee . . . that gives opposition voices and alternative proposals the ability to be heard and considered on the floor of the House.''

Mr. Speaker, where is the commitment to that promise, with only six of 23 amendments made in order? What has changed, Mr. Speaker? Is it political expediency or is it a broken promise?

Mr. Speaker, the Rules chairman, Ms. SLAUGHTER, has said, ''If we want to foster democracy in this body, we should take the time and the thoughtfulness to debate all major legislation under an open rule, not just appropriations bills . . . an open process should be the norm, not the exception.''

Mr. Speaker, what's changed? Is it political expediency or is it a broken promise?

Rules Committee member Mr. MCGOVERN has said, ''I would say to my colleagues on the other side of the aisle, if you want to show some bipartisanship, if you want to promote a process that has some integrity, then this should be an open rule. All Members should have an opportunity to come here and offer amendments to this bill to improve the quality of the deliberations on this House floor. They should be able to come and offer amendments to clean up this place.''

Well, Mr. Speaker, what's changed? Is it political expediency or is it a broken promise?

Democratic Caucus Chair RAHM EMANUEL has said, ''Let's have an up-and-down vote. Don't be scared. Do not hide behind some little rule. Come on out here. Put it out on the table and let's have a vote . . . So don't hide behind the rule. If this is what you want to do, let's have an up-and-down vote. You can put your votes right up there . . . and then the American people can see what it is all about.''

So what has changed, Mr. Speaker? Is it political expediency or is it a broken promise?

Mr. Speaker, I am also very curious as to what has happened with the distinguished chairman and my friend on the Financial Services Committee. In the past, not only has he been a vocal advocate for open rules to the legislation that he has brought to the floor, but the new majority has spared him no effort to applaud him for doing so. In fact, Chairman FRANK was such a firm believer in allowing debate, allowing consideration of amendments, that Representative WELCH of Vermont felt so moved to say, ''All of us applaud the work of Chairman FRANK for recommending an open rule to this bill . . . ''

But, Mr. Speaker, that was on a previous bill. So I would ask what's changed. What is the chairman afraid of? Because it certainly appears that he has lost his passion for an open and a fair process.

In a letter dated July 9, 2007, to the Chair of the House Committee on Rules, Ms. SLAUGHTER, Chairman FRANK urged that the Rules Committee ''provide a structured amendment process.'' So what's changed, Mr. Speaker? What's changed?

□ 1845

The Rules Committee Web site lists 23 amendments submitted for consideration, yet only six were made in order. So what's so scary about the other 17? What's so scary?

Mr. Speaker, I submitted three amendments not made in order by this draconian and restrictive rule. My first amendment would have applied pay-as-you-go spending rules to this bill that CBO has said will have a net cost of $2.4 billion over the next 5 years. Remember Democrats' promise to use PAYGO rules for everything; instead, they're picking and choosing when to do so. At home we call that breaking a rule and breaking a promise.

The second amendment, Mr. Speaker, is clearly a substantive one. It would have prevented, as the gentlelady from Florida said, prevented illegal immigrants from receiving assistance under the section 8 program by providing all adults to provide secure identification before receiving assistance. It's the kind of commonsense amendment that the Financial Services Committee has applied before. It has also been accepted by the full House on other legislation.

The third amendment would have helped clarify a new requirement for public housing authorities. This bill provides that the public housing authorities have to report rental payments as alternative data to the credit bureaus. Rental payment information is clearly different than other forms of commerce and may need to be treated differently in order to ensure accuracy of credit reporting.

These were three thoughtful and substantive amendments which deserved the consideration of all 435 Members of the House, but they were denied that opportunity, Mr. Speaker, by this restrictive and draconian rule.

Mr. Speaker, back home in my district, rules aren't rules if you only follow them when you want to. Democrats promised to use a fair and open process for everything. Instead, they're picking and choosing. And when you pick and choose to do so, it's called breaking a rule and breaking a promise.

So I urge the new majority to rededicate itself to its campaign promises of a fair and open process. We should allow this Chamber to work its will on all legislation. An open process shouldn't just be something that's just talked about solely on the campaign trail. What amendment was so scary that it ought not be included in this discussion?

I urge my colleagues to vote ''no'' on the rule so that we may have a complete, open and fair debate. The American people deserve and expect no less.

Ms. CASTOR. Mr. Speaker, the Democrats are going to keep their promise to the American people by fighting for affordable housing.

Mr. Speaker, at this time, I yield 1 minute to the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY).

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. I thank the gentlelady for yielding and just say this is an incredibly important bill. It will expand the number of units of affordable housing and expand the number of vouchers to over 100,000. That's extremely important to the American people.

And in response to the gentleman, if he cared so much about his amendment, he should have offered it during the committee. Chairman FRANK and Subcommittee Chairwoman WATERS held hearings and thoroughly discussed every amendment. The committee met for 2 complete days and thoroughly discussed every amendment. If the gentleman wanted and cared about his amendment, he should have put it forward before the committee.

The rule is very fair. Out of the six amendments that had have been accepted, three are Republican, one is bipartisan, and the other is a bipartisan manager's amendment. So the gentleman is not looking at what is the real issue. The real issue is providing affordable housing that is desperately needed in our country. Many families are facing the increased cost of living, and there is a lack of affordable housing. I object strenuously to the facts in the statement by my good friend on the other side of the aisle.

Madam Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 1853, the Section 8 Voucher Reform Act of 2007 (SEVRA). This bill comes before the House at a critical time.

Right now too many Americans face the double onslaught of stagnant wages and ever increasing costs of living, including a critical lack of affordable housing. That is why it is so important to send a strong message to our constituents that we support stable, safe and affordable communities.

Affordable housing is a critical component of this, and Section 8 housing vouchers provide vital rental assistance for low-income families, seniors, and the disabled. I am pleased to report that this legislation comes to the floor with

the strong bipartisan support of the Financial Services Committee which passed this bill in May by a vote of 52–9.

This bill makes a number of changes to the Section 8 voucher, project-based and public housing programs. Specifically this bill:

Makes the Voucher Funding Formula More Efficient. The bill reforms the formula used to allocate Section 8 voucher funds to housing agencies to increase the number of families receiving vouchers.

Creates 100,000 New Vouchers. We authorize 20,000 new incremental vouchers a year over each of the next 5 years.

The Bill Promotes Homeownership. By allowing families to use housing vouchers as a down-payment on a first-time home purchase.

Encourages economic self-sufficiency for low income voucher and public housing families. H.R. 1851 includes a number of provisions designed to create incentives for families to obtain employment, increase earned income, pursue higher education, and save for retirement. No longer will our voucher formula discourage and penalize a voucher holder from seeking and obtaining employment.

Protects Tenants. The bill preserves the rights of voucher families to move to other areas, it addresses excessive voucher rent burdens, provides for more accurate fair market rent calculations to protect voucher holders in units that are in need of repair.

Stronger families and communities are a key part of the Democrats' New Direction for America. This bill strongly aids this goal.

I urge my colleagues to support this important legislation.

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Speaker, the gentleman from Georgia did offer this amendment in committee, and it was rejected. What he wanted was to be able to present it before the full House. And he was pointing out that the promise that had been made by the majority was that there would be more openness during the consideration of legislation such as this. And that's what the gentleman from Georgia was trying to point out.

At this time, Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to yield 3 minutes to the distinguished leader on this issue and many others, the gentlewoman from Illinois (Mrs. BIGGERT).

Mrs. BIGGERT. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, today I rise in reluctant opposition to this rule governing the consideration of H.R. 1851.

I had hoped that the committee would see the wisdom in providing an important open rule on this important legislation; and in the absence of an open rule, that it would at least make in order those amendments that Members took the time and effort to draft. Unfortunately, of the 23 amendments filed with the Rules Committee, only six were made in order. While I'm pleased that the majority of those amendments are Republican amendments, the other Republican and Democratic amendments deserved to be debated and given a full and fair hearing.

Section 8 vouchers are tenant-based as well as project-based subsidies that low-income families use in the private market to lower their rental cost to 30 percent of their incomes. The program has grown to replace public housing as the primary tool for subsidizing the housing costs of low-income families.

Through this program, HUD provides portable subsidies to individuals, tenant-based, who are seeking rental housing from qualified and approved owners, and provide subsidies to private property owners who set aside some or all of their units for low-income families. This is project-based.

The section 8 program began in 1974 primarily as a project-based rental assistance program. However, in the mid-1980s project-based assistance came under criticism for being too costly and for concentrating poor families in high-poverty areas. Consequently, in 1983, Congress stopped providing new project-based section 8 contracts and created vouchers as a new form of assistance.

Mr. Speaker, this bill reflects a bipartisan effort led by Chairman FRANK, Chairwoman WATERS and Republican members of the committee. In fact, this bill enjoyed substantial Republican support in the Financial Services Committee. I am an original cosponsor, along with Mr. SHAYS.

During committee deliberation, we were given the opportunity to debate and consider a variety of issues pertaining to this bill. Members on our side of the aisle had hoped to be given the same opportunity to debate important issues on the House floor. For example, the amendment filed by my colleagues, Mr. PRICE, Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE, Mrs. CAPITO and Mr. CAMPBELL, requiring proper documentation when seeking section 8 Federal assistance was not made in order. This is an important amendment, and I would have hoped we would have the opportunity to debate that issue fully.

There were other amendments filed my by colleagues, Congressmen CHABOT, KING and WICKER, that I think deserve to be considered by the full House. These Members do not serve on the Financial Services Committee and should have been given the chance to offer amendments crucial to their constituents and districts.

Republicans support many aspects of H.R. 1851, but we all deserve the right to participate in the amendment process, whether as members of the committee of jurisdiction or as a Member of the U.S. House of Representatives. Only through an open rule is that possible. For this reason, as a supporter of this legislation, I rise in reluctant opposition to the rule.

Ms. CASTOR. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LEE).

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, first let me thank the gentlelady for yielding, and also for your leadership, and for bringing together today a very fair rule.

I rise in strong support of this rule and in strong support of this bill, the Section 8 Voucher Reform Act of 2007. And I want to commend, first of all, our committee chairman, Mr. FRANK, and our subcommittee chairwoman, Congresswoman WATERS, for their leadership and for their hard work in crafting this bill.

As a former member of the Financial Services Committee, actually a member of Congresswoman WATERS' Subcommittee on Housing, I had the opportunity to work with my colleagues on earlier versions of this bill, and this end product contains many important updated provisions. For example, this bill permits families to use housing vouchers as a down payment on a first-time home purchase. The goal of home ownership is necessary to help stabilize family units, promote gainful employment, and restore pride and dignity to many low-income families. It is the primary path to wealth accumulation in America for ordinary folks who don't have stock accounts and who can't play in the stock market and on Wall Street. It's the way to achieve the American Dream for most folks in America. And so home ownership is extremely important, and this bill offers that opportunity.

It also offers a number of changes that protect and benefit tenants. Examples include the portability provisions that preserve voucher families' ability to move to other areas as they determine. They deserve that right and should be able to do that. It provides for more accurate and fair market rent calculation. And it also protects voucher holders in units that are in need of repairs.

Section 8 housing vouchers provide the security of affordable housing to many low-income families, the elderly, people with disabilities, and others who need this type of rental assistance. This leads to stronger families and safer communities, and it does prevent homelessness.

There is a housing crisis in America. This bill is a major step forward in addressing it.

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to yield 4 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Michigan (Mr. KNOLLENBERG).

Mr. KNOLLENBERG. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to provide some perspective on the effect H.R. 1851 will have on discretionary spending and on the appropriations process. If we're not careful, we will be opening the door to a huge new spending at uncontrollable rates.

The section 8 voucher program has proved widely successful and popular. But there is also wide consensus that we must provide reform to the program, which I agree with. We all want the program to be effective, provide assistance to those truly in need and be fiscally responsible for American taxpayers.

First, I want to point out, there are positive reforms in H.R. 1851. The bill increases the number of PHAs allowed

to participate in the Moving to Work Program. This program, renamed in the bill as the Housing Innovation Program, gives PHAs flexibility to design and test methods that achieve efficiency, reduce costs and promote self-sufficiency.

The bill also enhances HUD's Family Self-Sufficiency Act program which works to give low-income families the skills and experience needed to become economically independent.

I do, however, have major concerns with the provisions in H.R. 1851 that abandons the budget-based funding methodology. Going back to the flawed unit-based methodology like this bill proposes is a recipe for budgetary disaster.

A unit-based system lacks incentives for PHAs to maximize assistance to needy families within a fixed budget. A unit-based formula system that includes costs incurred as well as units put under lease simply tells PHAs to lease at whatever cost they want, even if it is more than the market rate and the market price for the same unit. We already know what that can mean. We have experience with a unit-based approach and have seen what it means.

In fiscal years 2003 and 2004, the Appropriations Committee shifted to a unit-based funding to spur leasing, and the result was skyrocketing per unit cost and total funding requirements that increased by 40 percent, from $9 billion to $13 billion, in 2 years. In 2005, a budget-based system was reinstituted.

We, as appropriators, can simply not afford to see a similar increase in the future. Today, in total, the section 8 program has grown to consume 60 percent of HUD's budget. Going back to a unit-based program will only increase that percentage. Simply put, as the Housing Voucher Program takes up more of HUD's budget, there will be less we will have for other housing programs.

As the former chairman of the Appropriations Subcommittee for HUD, and as the current chairman will attest, the growing Housing Voucher Program is forcing Congress to choose between section 8 vouchers and other important HUD priorities. That includes programs that support first-time ownership, home ownership, homeless facilities, and care and housing for the elderly and the disabled.

And then there is this Community Development Block Grant, which I believe virtually every Member supports because they hear from their mayor, the city council and from the county administrators on how the program makes their community better. If we're not careful, these programs will face deep cuts in future years just to accommodate the section 8 increases.

Mr. Speaker, this bill is a work in progress. It has been improved in committee, and I believe amendments before us today can improve it further. I am hopeful that as the bill works its way through into the legislative process, we can improve it even more.

Ms. CASTOR. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank all the distinguished colleagues who have participated in this debate. Obviously this is a very, very important piece of legislation that is being brought forth today.

We have concerns with regard to the process, not in the creation of the legislation itself but in the way in which it has been brought forth to the floor and the rule that brings the legislation to the floor and establishes the terms of debate for the legislation.

I think it has been a good debate. I think we've been able to express certainly our concern with the process, as well as in the case of most Members that I have certainly heard on this debate, the evident awareness of the importance of the underlying legislation and the issue dealt with by the underlying legislation.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. CASTOR. Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to thank, on behalf of the folks I represent back home in Florida and all Americans, express my thanks to Chairwoman Maxine Waters and to Chairman Barney Frank for standing up and fighting for America's families and affordable housing.

I urge my colleagues to continue the American tradition of promoting the American Dream and turning that dream into a reality for decent, safe, clean and affordable housing, particularly for the elderly, the disabled, veterans in our community, domestic violence victims and all families.

□ 1900

Mr. Speaker, I urge a ''yes'' vote on the previous question and on the rule.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time, and I move the previous question on the resolution.

The previous question was ordered.

The resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks on H.R. 1851 and insert extraneous material thereon.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from California?

There was no objection.

SECTION 8 VOUCHER REFORM ACT OF 2007

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Ms. CASTOR). Pursuant to House Resolution 534 and rule XVIII, the Chair declares the House in the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for the consideration of the bill, H.R. 1851.

□ 1902

IN THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Accordingly, the House resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for the consideration of the bill (H.R. 1851) to reform the housing choice voucher program under section 8 of the United States Housing Act of 1937, with Mr. WEINER in the chair.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to the rule, the bill is considered read the first time.

The gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATERS) and the gentlewoman from Illinois (Mrs. BIGGERT) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California.

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Chairman, I yield to myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Chairman, I rise in strong support of H.R. 1851, the Section 8 Voucher Reform Act of 2007. As you know, I introduced H.R. 1851 on March 29, 2007. I want to thank each of my colleagues, both on the Committee on Financial Services and in the House, who have joined with me to see that this important legislation passes the House. I especially want to thank Chairman BARNEY FRANK for his leadership, Ranking Member JUDY BIGGERT, and CHRISTOPHER SHAYS for their original cosponsorship and support of H.R. 1851.

It has been less than 2 months since the Committee on Financial Services considered major reforms to the section 8 program. The Section 8 Voucher Reform Act of 2007, which passed the Committee on Financial Services by a vote of 52–9, is truly the culmination of work that began in the 109th Congress.

There are many Members of Congress who have expressed major concerns to me about the future stability of the section 8 voucher program, given the recent changes in the funding formula and its impact on tenants. This bill addresses many of those problems and will return much needed stability to the section 8 program and the 2 million low-income families who rely upon it.

We heard from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, public housing agencies, national housing interest groups and advocates, and other housing experts about the importance of reforming the section 8 program. While there is consensus that the section 8 program needed to be reformed, HUD disagrees on how to reform the program.

National housing organizations like the National Low Income Housing Coalition and the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities which represent those directly affected by the change in the funding formula agree that basing the funding for a program as important as the voucher program on data that is 3 years old is just simply bad policy.

In 2004, Congress changed how we paid public housing authorities for vouchers under lease. Instead of paying the actual cost of the voucher, the decision was made to pay for what the

voucher cost during a 3-month period in the previous year. This had disastrous consequences for PHAs. Many saw a cut in their funding.

While section 8 recipients had to bear the brunt of this policy change as waiting lists closed, many low-income families who had been waiting for affordable housing for years suddenly found housing denied to them. Because of cost concerns, some families were denied their right to move to areas that may have been a bit more expensive but had better job and educational opportunities. Some families saw an increase in rent as many PHAs scrambled to cut costs.

As families struggled under this formula, so did some of our Nation's largest PHAs. The snapshot funding system had consistently and has consistently underpaid some PHAs to the benefit of others. Because of the funding instability, these PHAs had no reason to house more families. As a result, housing authorities are sitting on $1.4 billion in unspent voucher funds. This nonuse of our voucher dollars is unacceptable because we have lost 150,000 vouchers as a direct result of the funding formula.

Clearly, this formula must be changed for the good of public housing agencies and the families they serve. HUD is just wrong in this issue. I flatly reject their just-released statement of policy on the bill. H.R. 1851 updates the voucher formula by basing funding for vouchers on the previous year's leasing and cost data.

The use of more accurate data will ensure that we stop overpaying and underpaying PHAs for vouchers, but instead come as close as we can to paying the actual cost of the voucher. This will enable HUD to better control costs than the section 8 voucher program. This funding approach was recently embraced by both Houses of Congress in H.J. Res. 20.

Vouchers are a scarce resource, but are even scarcer since the funding formula changed in 2004. Only one out of four families who are eligible for housing assistance, including vouchers, actually receive it. H.R. 1851 provides PHAs with several resources for increasing the number of families they serve.

First, the bill provides for the recapture and redistribution of most unspent voucher funds for housing agencies that have chosen not to use these dollars to PHAs that are capable and willing to spend them. This reallocation system will provide PHAs with an incentive to house more families.

Second, the bill provides tools for PHAs to pay for increased costs or emergencies without having to cut assistance to families or to request new funding from the HUD or the Congress. The bill allows PHAs to retain up to a 1-month reserve in the formula's first year. For those PHAs that need additional funds, the bill allows them to borrow up to 2 percent of their budget authority, to be repaid within the first 3 months of the following year.

Third, the bill provides an authorization of appropriation for 20,000 new incremental vouchers per year for 5 years. Congress has not authorized new vouchers since 2002.

During this period, we all know that the need for voucher assistance has grown, not declined. We are not meeting the need for housing vouchers for very low-income persons in this country, working families, the disabled and elderly. Additional vouchers are needed to make sure that the voucher program continues to keep up with the ever-expanding need for affordable housing in this Nation.

Fourth, the bill provides incentives for PHAs to increase families served by tying administrative funding to the number of families housed.

Fifth, the bill restores housing choice, an important feature of the voucher program which has been lost because of cost concerns. H.R. 1851 would eliminate the complex billing process between PHAs using portable vouchers.

Mr. Chairman, this is a bill that will restore stability and predictability to the Nation's largest Federal housing program by fixing the broken funding formula. H.R. 1851 provides for the needs of the families, public housing agencies and landlords who participate in this program.

The funding formula, however, is not the only aspect of the section 8 program in need of reform. Today, housing agencies and program recipients must deal with the complicated set of rules for the determination of rent, recertification of income and inspection of housing units. H.R. 1851 simplifies those requirements, while maintaining current affordable standards.

H.R. 1851 also includes tools to encourage voucher families to move to economic self-sufficiency. Families should not have to pay more in rent because they want to work to provide for their families. By disregarding a portion of earned income, H.R. 1851 would protect families from any resultant increases in rent.

Families also shouldn't be penalized for pursuing educational opportunities. Currently, many families in the voucher and public housing programs can find themselves excluded from work and economic opportunities because of a lack of credit history or low credit scores. The bill would allow the Department to work with the Nation's credit bureaus to allow for the reporting of the rental payment history of voucher and public housing recipients.

In addition, the bill will increase homeownership opportunities for voucher families by allowing them to use a section 8 voucher to make a down payment on their first home. Importantly, the bill provides for a change to the funding structure for family self-sufficiency coordinated to ensure that families have the tools to take advantage of these opportunities.

Without going into all of what is taken care of and what is reformed, I have tried to share the major reforms that we have created for our families who will be receiving assistance through the section 8 program.

Mr. Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mrs. BIGGERT. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Chairman, I would like first to thank all of my colleagues and their staffs from both sides of the aisle for working to craft a bipartisan section 8 reform bill that we are considering today. In particular I would like to thank Chairman FRANK and Subcommittee Chairwoman WATERS for their hard work, committee Ranking Member BACHUS for his support, and the gentleman from Connecticut, Mr. SHAYS, who joined me as an original cosponsor of this bill.

Mr. Chairman, this is a bipartisan bill that passed out of our committee by a vote of 52–9. It is similar to the section 8 reform bill that then Chairman Oxley moved through the Financial Services Committee during the last Congress. It was a bipartisan bill then too, passing out of the committee by a voice vote.

The section 8, or Housing Choice Voucher Program, is the major Federal program helping the elderly, the disabled and the very low-income families find affordable housing in the private market. Today's housing vouchers are the primary tool of assistance provided under section 8.

Many of my colleagues served in this body when housing vouchers were first proposed and implemented under a Republican administration, that of President Reagan. The Section 8 Voucher Program was designed to move people away from large concentrated housing projects, like our Cabrini-Green or Robert Taylor Homes in Chicago. It allows individuals to make decisions about where they want to live, instead of forcing them to live in large public housing projects filled with crime, poverty and despair.

For the colleagues on my side of the aisle, I should admit, quite frankly, that this bill is better than I expected it to be. We have been able to get several key issues addressed in this bill that were not addressed in last year's Republican legislation.

I want to thank Chairman WATERS, who coauthored with me a manager's amendment that the committee accepted during our markup that includes a number of provisions to increase the flexibility of project-based section 8 vouchers. It amended section 8 of the law regarding the use of vouchers to purchase manufactured homes, voucher reserves, portability, performance assessment, disabled vouchers and rent levels.

In addition, I am pleased that included in this bill is language that is identical to the Family Self-Sufficiency Act, or FSS, a bill that I introduced as a stand-alone measure. This

bill enhances HUD's FSS program by providing housing authorities with consistent coordinator funding. Housing authorities can then help more individuals move from public assistance to being self-sufficient homeowners.

Perhaps most important for Members on my side of the aisle is that this bill includes a significant expansion of Moving to Work, or the MTW program. Members on both sides of the aisle have public housing authorities in their district that seek to become Moving to Work housing authorities.

In my district, DuPage Housing Authority would like this status. However, to date, Congress has only authorized 32 housing authorities to be MTWs. During the committee markup, we increased the authorization to a total of 80, which is a remarkable achievement. In addition, the Moving to Work provisions in this bill require HUD to craft standards that will govern eligibility requirements from being considered and/or designated as a Moving to Work authority. This bill includes important tenant protections that make the MTW Program better than it is today.

Finally, I am also pleased that we included a provision that will measure the success of the program. Congress created the Moving to Work program in 1996, but it does not require HUD to establish standards and evaluate agencies' performance.

□ 1915

Now granted, the administration does not support this bill, nor did it support the Oxley bill last year or in the previous Congress.

Why? Well, because in their view, it does not reform the program enough. They believe it moves the program from one that is currently budget based to a unit-based system that Mr. KNOLLENBERG spoke about earlier. But I think that point is subject to interpretation. And politics is the art of the possible; and absent this bill, no reform is possible.

This bill does not include everything that I wanted either. The section 8 funding formula my colleagues will recall was changed in the CR earlier this year. I have on several occasions offered amendments in committee to address this formula change, and we did include in the manager's amendment a provision that will provide PHAs a cushion in the transition year so they are not penalized for CR formula change.

I believe there is more work to be done. There are 1,200 PHAs. Half of those across the country do not suffer from unjustified and significant funding cuts as a result of the new section 8 funding formula included in the CR.

Chairman FRANK has agreed to engage in a colloquy with me about this, and I look forward to doing that in a few moments. I hope we will continue to work together as we continue to address the continued shortcomings of this formula.

This is a good bill and one deserving of our support, and I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to vote for it.

Mr. Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Chairman, I yield Chairman FRANK such time as he may consume.

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. I thank the gentlewoman, not so much for yielding but for the really extraordinary work she has done on this, the gentlewoman from California, and I want to say how much I admire the two tracks she has worked on. On the one track, she has been one of the leaders on our side in the House on the issue of Iraq and ending our involvement in the war in Iraq where I am a strong follower of her.

Simultaneously, she has engaged in some very careful and thoughtful legislative work, and I think that is the mark of a complete legislator, to be able to do the ideologically based advocacy but also work in a bipartisan way, continuing work which began when she was the ranking member and in a seamless way to go forward.

I spoke during the rule where I expressed my strong support for the legislation. I have rarely seen legislation so broadly supported by the landlords, by the local housing authorities that administer it and by the beneficiaries. There is a three-way operation here, and all of them consider this bill to be an improvement.

As the gentlewoman from Illinois said, it does not improve everything as much as everybody would like; nothing ever does. But she is correct, this is an improvement. I would ask my friend from California to yield to her so we can talk about it, but she has already done some of the things that she talked about. For instance, in the manager's amendment, we will increase the reserves available to housing authorities to avoid any damage that would come in the transition on the new funding formula. I know the gentlewoman has some other concerns, and I hope if the gentlewoman from California will yield to her, I can respond to them.

Ms. WATERS. I yield to the gentlewoman from Illinois (Mrs. BIGGERT).

Mrs. BIGGERT. I thank the gentlewoman, and I would like to engage in a colloquy with Chairman FRANK at this time.

Chairman FRANK, as you may recall, the section 8 funding formula was changed through provisions in the continuing resolution. I did not support these changes because they did cut about 1,500 public housing authority slots in three counties in my congressional district. And as Chairman FRANK can verify, I have on several occasions offered amendments to change this.

I am pleased that the manager's amendment includes a provision which addresses this problem. While I am pleased that we can take productive steps towards addressing the shortcomings, I believe we can do more as we move on, and it is my understanding that members of the Appropriations Committee have included a similar provision in the fiscal year 2008 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Appropriations bill. Would the chairman consider supporting this?

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. The gentlewoman has stated this correctly. I know this is going to be in the appropriations bill. We expect it. I haven't seen the appropriations bill yet. I have great confidence in the subcommittee chairman, but I certainly agree with her in principle. And unless there is some very unusual wording which we could change, yes, I would be subject to saying, yes, that is exactly what we intend.

Mrs. BIGGERT. I thank the gentleman.

Again regarding the rebenchmarking, both the current formula and the one in this bill would base a PHA's annual funding level on a ''snapshot'' of the PHA's use of funds from the previous 12 months. However, I continue to be concerned that his annual benchmarking is unworkable when coupled with the congressional budget cycle. For this reason, I hope we can continue to work together as we move forward to address the continued shortcomings of this formula. PHAs have always stated and continue to argue that their main concern is to have predictability and certainty in funding so they can plan both voucher utilization and staffing. I know they would appreciate more predictability. If the snapshot and the rebenchmarking were done every other year, would the chairman continue to explore with me the benefits of a biennial versus annual rebenchmarking?

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. The answer is, again, yes. This is a very important subject which the gentlewoman from Illinois has identified. I promise we will work together. If we decide this needs to be a legislative change, I can promise the gentlelady that the committee will entertain the appropriate legislation and do that.

Mrs. BIGGERT. Again, I thank the gentleman.

In addition, I would like to ask the chairman to consider other measures to assist PHAs in the transition period and in the subsequent years. For example, I would like the chairman to consider a so-called hold-harmless provision attached to the new section 8 formula. The provision would provide PHAs with an assurance that they would not lose more than a certain percentage of funds in any given year due to the utilization rates in the previous years. The reasons for this are many, but at the heart of the matter is the simple fact that the so-called excess in funds that many PHAs were caught with when the new formula was dropped into the CR were not in fact excess at all but the result of deliberate choices, court-ordered requirements or special set-aside categories of

vouchers. The PHAs should not be losing all of these vouchers in the first year. The percentage could range from perhaps 10 to 25 percent. And again, PHAs deserve stability and predictability in funding. Would the chairman work with me to craft a hold-harmless provision to include in this bill or the appropriations bill?

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. The answer here is definitely yes. I think a hold-harmless provision is appropriate.

The purpose of the change, as the gentlewoman knows, in our mind was to prevent a kind of downward ratcheting in the overall usage. But consistent with that, we don't want to penalize particular authorities.

We have already done some work, for instance, with the Dade County authority to take into account the fact that their shortfall came because of a hurricane, so they were not penalized by that. But the hold-harmless provision is a perfectly reasonable one, and I agree with the gentlewoman. I promise to work with the gentlewoman to do whatever we need to do legislatively to accomplish it.

Mrs. BIGGERT. Again, I thank the chairman; and thank the gentlewoman for the time.

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mrs. BIGGERT. Mr. Chairman, I yield 8 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. GARY G. MILLER), a member of the Committee on Financial Services.

Mr. GARY G. MILLER of California. Mr. Chairman, I rise in support of H.R. 1851, the Section 8 Voucher Reform Act.

This is something we have been working on for years, and I am pleased we have it to this point today. I commend Chairman FRANK. BARNEY, you have been great to work with on these issues. When we express concerns, he is always willing to look at policy rather than politics. We have arrived at a bill we can all look at and say, there are things we might change, but overall, we all agree it is a good bill.

I would like to commend Ranking Member BACHUS for all of his help and assistance. Chairman WATERS, it has been fun working with you on this issue, as well as Ranking Member BIGGERT.

Working together in a bipartisan manner, we have produced a bill that will help the section 8 program better serve families and communities across the country.

Over the years, Congress has grappled with the skyrocketing cost of the section 8 program, which is growing so rapidly that HUD's other programs are suffering as a result.

It is not feasible for the Federal Government to continue increasing funds for a program without enacting meaningful reforms.

In the 109th Congress, I introduced legislation to improve the delivery of housing assistance to families in need by providing flexibility to local public housing authorities, PHAs, and holding them accountable for results.

The goal of my legislation was to ensure that PHAs would serve as many families as possible within their budget. While the bill before us today does not go as far as my proposal in injecting flexibility to PHAs in their administration of the entire section 8 program, H.R. 1851 does make a number of improvements to the section 8 program to reform the simplified regulations for local housing agencies.

I appreciate Chairman FRANK's willingness to work with me to allow for PHA innovation on a scale he is more comfortable with. While the bill before us does not apply flexibility to the entire program, I am pleased it at least allows a permanency and expansion of the Moving To Work program, renamed in this bill as the Housing Innovation Program, HIP.

The Moving to Work Program has allowed a small group of PHAs to create locally based housing programs outside of HUD's one-size-fits-all regulations. The program has enabled PHAs to create jobs for residents, add affordable housing stock and help families build savings.

Currently, over 24 of the more than 3,000 PHAs nationwide are participating in the Moving to Work program. H.R. 1851 provides access to more agencies nationwide seeking MTW status.

Through the new HIP program, we will be able to take away ''best practices'' to apply to the entire section 8 program in the future. I am confident that the innovation that will be produced through the flexibility provided in the HIP will demonstrate ways to truly reform section 8 so we can serve more families efficiently and help move them to self-sufficiency.

The manager's amendment, which will be debated later this evening, includes language I crafted to provide PHAs with the flexibility to establish rent structures as they see best to address the needs of their communities.

The language gives PHAs the flexibility to select from a menu of tenant rent policies, including flat rent, rents based on income ranges, rents based on percentage of income, or other innovative rent policies.

HUD and many PHAs agree that the current Federal approach to tenant rent contribution is a regressive system that penalizes residents by charging higher rents for those who gain employment and income.

If a section 8 recipient's salary increases, so does their rent. This creates a disincentive for work. Our goal should be to provide a helping hand to those who need it but also ensure that they are on a path to self-sufficiency. Rather than providing incentives for work, the current section 8 program provides incentives for people to lie about their income or to reject opportunities to increase their income since they would be forced to pay more rent. I don't think this is a message we should be sending in this program. We should be instilling responsibility and desire to achieve in our housing assistance policy, not encouraging dishonesty and creating disincentives for success.

I am pleased the chairman has worked with me on language to allow PHAs the option of setting rents in innovative ways to help families achieve self-sufficiency.

The reality is that we face a situation of growing waiting lists for section 8 vouchers without the resources to serve everyone. The answer is not to merely throw more money into an existing regressive system in a department where there are other pressing needs that need to be met. We need to move current section 8 recipients to self-sufficiency by allowing PHAs to be innovative with the money they do have, to be efficient and help as many people in need move through the program as possible.

While this bill does not go as far as I think we need it to go in terms of allowing flexibility, I believe it is a step in the right direction and will make needed improvements to the section 8 program. I look forward to the debate on the amendments tonight as I believe we can continue to improve the legislation as we move forward.

I would like to enter into a colloquy with the chairman, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. FRANK).

There seems to be a misunderstanding on the part of HUD. Mr. FRANK, this bill includes a revision and expansion of the Moving to Work Program, MTW, renamed the Housing Innovation Program, HIP. Under the program authority of HIP, the Secretary may designate up to 60 public housing agencies to fully participate in the program, and an additional 20 public housing agencies may participate in the program under what is called the HIP-Lite provisions.

Under the current MTW program, authorization has been granted for 32 public housing authorities to participate in the program. However, HUD narrowly defined the legislative authority under which they could solicit new applications. HUD decided that once PHAs leave the program, no new agencies can be selected to fill their vacancy. The result is, out of 32 authorized, only 24 agencies are currently in the program.

I would like to confirm that the intent of this bill is to allow HUD to solicit new applications in order to maintain the program at its fully authorized level and to give PHAs the opportunity to fill any vacancies.

I would like to confirm that you agree that the secretary of HUD should promptly solicit new applications from PHAs interested in participating in the HIP program whenever the number of agencies is less than the total authorized level, and that would be 60 under this bill; is that correct, sir?

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Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Mr. Chairman, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. GARY G. MILLER of California. I yield to the gentleman from Massachusetts.

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Mr. Chairman, the gentleman from California is absolutely correct. The alternative interpretation would make no sense.

Of course, HUD should have and does have the authority to select replacements. What we set was a maximum number of participating agencies, and if an agency withdraws, then a new agency should be replaced.

If I may, I should note that the chairman of the subcommittee, who is such a devoted supporter of fairness, has raised some questions about the Moving to Work program, or whatever the new name is, and I have spoken with her. And I think what would be appropriate, and I think we would all agree, when we return from the summer recess to have a hearing on how the Moving to Work program is, in fact, operating, and I think that would be an appropriate thing to do.

But certainly under this law and under the agreements we reached, we set a number of housing authorities that are eligible to participate, and there shouldn't be any question, if an authority drops out, then HUD has the obligation, not just the permission, but the obligation to replace it.

Mr. GARY G. MILLER of California. I thank you.

So HUD understands, if it does drop to 50, it should be moved up promptly to 60, and I look forward to the hearing.

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Chairman, I yield to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. ANDREWS) 2 minutes.

(Mr. ANDREWS asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Chairman, I'd like to thank the chairwoman, my friend from California, for yielding.

The chairwoman and I came to this Congress on the very same day in 1990, and I'm extremely proud of the work she's done on this bill and gratified to support it.

I especially want to thank her for including language that I think will help underdogs, and the chairwoman has been a friend of the underdog for a very long time, and in her work in Sacramento she achieved her visions where tenants who were being mistreated by landlords, where the property was not being properly kept up and was not habitable, would be given the option of withholding rent in order to force repairs on the property. She's taken that provision and extended that principle in this bill in a way for which I salute her.

The bill contains provisions that say in situations where a public housing authority chooses, when notified of serious code violations by a tenant, it may take actions to withhold part of the section 8 voucher payment that would otherwise go to the landlord. And the purpose of this would be to empower the public housing authority under certain circumstances to deduct that amount of money and pay for the repairs.

What does this mean? It means a powerless person who doesn't have a political action committee or a lobbyist or a lot of political power but who needs their sink fixed or a broken window repaired or a heater repaired for the first time is going to have sufficient leverage to do so.

I think this will have three very important effects. First, it will be fair and right for these tenants. Second, it will be fair for landlords. If the tenant is the cause of the problem or if a landlord is acting responsibly, this poses no burden on a landlord. And third, it will help responsible local officials prevent blight and degradation of certain neighborhoods so that each person can live in an environment that's proper and good for their family.

So I want to thank the chairwoman for her characteristic advocacy on behalf of the underdog, for taking this idea, and I would urge support of the bill.

Mrs. BIGGERT. Mr. Chairman, I'd like to yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. PRICE), a member of the committee.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Mr. Chairman, I want to thank my good friend from Illinois for yielding, and I want to thank also the Chair of the committee and Chair of the subcommittee for the work that they have done on this, and the ranking member.

I rise to express a few sincere and serious concerns with section 9 of the bill. This is the section that allows the public housing authorities, or the PHAs, to report the rental payments of its tenants to credit reporting agencies.

Reporting alternative data, like rental payments, to the credit reporting agencies may indeed be a very good thing. The hope obviously is that increased alternative data will help improve the credit reports for consumers and, in the long run, provide them with better and less expensive access to credit. In this increasingly credit-drive society, that's truly an important thing.

However, I've got four specific concerns with the way that the language in section 9 of this bill is written.

First is the format that this data will take. The language of the underlying bill requires the PHAs and credit reporting agencies to establish a system and format for reporting the new data. This is obviously new territory for PHAs, and they haven't done it before and aren't financial institutions and have no history of providing reporting data in the proper format.

Second concern is that this section may be incorrectly read to constitute a new requirement on the credit reporting agencies, and I would submit that this would be a drastic and significant change to our current system. Currently, credit reporting agencies must consider the timeliness of the data supplied to them. They must verify that it is accurate data, ensure that there hasn't been any case of identity fraud so that false data is not included in an unsuspecting consumer's credit file. Rental payment, clearly that information is different than other forms of commerce, and it may need to be treated differently.

A third concern is that the section, as it reads, would apply to ''families receiving tenant-based housing choice vouchers.'' Credit files historically are unique to individuals. Credit reporting agencies have no way to adjust their credit files for an entire family. So I wonder again sincerely what the real consequences of this ambiguity and potentially harmful aspect are to spreading potential financial responsibility to some without regard to accountability.

My fourth concern may be the most important, and that is, that the underlying legislation requires that the PHA, or the public housing agency, gain the permission of the family in writing before submitting the data to credit reporting agencies. This provision potentially would turn our credit reporting system on its head. It's a 100-year-old system based on the voluntary reporting of data to credit reporting agencies. If consumers are able to turn on or off when the data is reported, then it, in its essence, undermines completely the accuracy of the credit reports.

Both those who furnish the data to the credit reporting agencies and those who use that data to offer credit to consumers rely on the accuracy of these reports so that they can appropriately and responsibly price the cost of credit to a specific consumer. If someone can decide not to submit certain data to a credit reporting agency, then the accuracy of that data will be greatly compromised.

I sincerely believe that a few minor changes to the underlying legislation would indeed perfect the language in a way that would allow for new alternative data to help consumers and also to have that new data submitted in a way that does not undermine a credit reporting system that truly has become the envy of the world.

It's my hope that we can work on these concerns as this legislation moves forward, and once again, I want to thank the gentlewoman from Illinois for her time and thank the Chair of the committee and subcommittee for their work on this issue.

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Chairman, I yield to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PASCRELL) 2 minutes.

(Mr. PASCRELL asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PASCRELL. Mr. Chairman, I'm honored to rise in support of H.R. 1851. I commend Chairman FRANK and Chairwoman WATERS for bringing this worthy legislation to the floor today.

This bipartisan bill will increase efficiency in our section 8 housing voucher

program and expand rental assistance opportunities, authorizing 20,000 new section 8 vouchers in each of the next 5 years, with a total of 100,000 new vouchers.

Section 8 rental assistance is a critical and widely used program, with approximately 2 million vouchers being distributed by more than 2,500 local public housing authorities.

I would like to draw attention to one specific provision of this legislation which will have widespread benefits, if we did nothing else today, and I think is the most meaningful thing we're doing today, by the way, if I may express my opinion, will have widespread benefits for housing authorities throughout this Nation, including those in my district.

In 2004, a new formula was instituted to fund public housing authorities that administer the section 8 program. The formula was based on a snapshot of PHA activity for May, June, and July of 2004. As a result, whatever a housing authority's needs were during that short period, they have been stuck with that number ever since. It is simply irrational to fund a program today based on what its needs were 3 years ago.

Some housing authorities were continually overfunded, some were underfunded. This provision left some housing authorities scrambling for funds and others with extra funding they couldn't access.

The bill we are considering today fixes this inefficient and outdated formula, requiring HUD to use data from the most recent 12 months to determine section 8 voucher funding. It's going to help a lot of people, a lot of people. Now funding will be guaranteed for all vouchers in use.

Even this administration has admitted that this flawed formula should be revised. I applaud the Financial Services Committee for including a fix in this legislation.

I urge my colleagues to vote in favor of H.R. 1851.

Mrs. BIGGERT. Mr. Chairman, I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. CAMPBELL), another member of the Financial Services Committee, to engage in a colloquy with Chairman FRANK.

Mr. CAMPBELL of California. Mr. Chairman, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding.

I just wanted to bring to the chairman's attention a situation with HUD financing that kind of makes no sense to me, and a specific situation which I'm aware of involves the Villa Nueva Apartments, which are in San Ysidro in the San Diego area of California, where the owner of this multi-family, affordable housing project wants to sell it. The buyer wants to keep it as an affordable housing project. He's committed to keep the rents unchanged, but yet since it is HUD financed, under current, I guess, rulings or something that HUD is making, that 100 percent of the proceeds of this project would actually not be available to the seller. I don't know why someone who owns something would want to sell it if they couldn't have any of the proceeds. So, as a result, the seller may not sell this project. They may hold on to it for a couple of years, and then the restrictions will expire and then they could sell it for something else.

So it seems to me that HUD's procedures on this are actually standing in the way of affordable housing companies acquiring and continuing affordable housing multi-unit projects.

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Mr. Chairman, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. CAMPBELL of California. I yield to the gentleman from Massachusetts.

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. I thank the gentleman from California.

I appreciate the gentleman from California making this very important point because it gives us a chance to highlight an important issue that this committee will be acting on.

I should just note that later today we will be considering an amendment on behalf of the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MARKEY) and the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. PRYCE) in similar circumstances, and we will be directing HUD to allow these to go forward.

The gentleman just learned of this, I know, and brought it to our attention, and I would begin by saying to him, if necessary, I would be supportive of doing the same in his case. I hope it won't be necessary.

Here's the situation that may people may not understand. Forty years ago and more, or about 40 years ago, we began, not us, with the exception of Mr. DINGELL, began a program of affordable housing where the Federal Government lent people money at either no interest or very low interest in return for it being affordable, but for some reason they put what they called an expiration date of 40 years.

Now, we stand to lose a lot of housing that is good housing currently affordable. We are looking for ways to let that be transferred to others who would keep that it way. I think HUD is being overly technical in some of these interpretations. It would clearly be in everybody's interest, for no budgetary cost we can preserve these units.

By the way, if the units are lost, what then happens is, under certain laws, the current tenants are entitled to enhanced vouchers. So we would then be paying more in enhanced vouchers to a new landlord. That doesn't make sense.

I just want to make this commitment to the gentleman. I hope after today's bill, which I hope it passes and the amendments for Mr. MARKEY and Ms. PRYCE are passed, that we can then sit with HUD on a bipartisan basis and try and find a way for them to do this administratively. If they tell us that they need a small fix, if there's some legislative problem, we could do that on suspension immediately. Even the Senate would do that one quickly.

I would say this. I hope that we will, today, get HUD's attention so that we can sit with them and work this out. I would rather have it done in policy. If necessary, we'll do a little fix.

And I would also say before the end of this year, and this is high on the agenda of the gentlewoman from California and myself, because this situation occurs all over the country in everybody's district or in most districts, if necessary, we will pass a bill that will give HUD all the authority necessary to prevent this loss of affordable housing for no good reason.

So I admire the gentleman for bringing it to our attention. I think, frankly, if we pass this bill and pass the Markey-Pryce amendment, we'll probably get a better response out of HUD, and if necessary, we will legislate it.

Mr. CAMPBELL of California. Thank you.

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Ms. WATERS. I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. BACA).

Mr. BACA. I want to thank my colleague for yielding. I rise also to support the Section 8 Voucher Reform Act of 2007.

I want to thank my good friend from California, Chairman MAXINE WATERS, for sponsoring this vital legislation.

I also want to thank our chair, Chairman FRANK, for his leadership and guidance in this committee.

Mr. Chairman, in 2004, when the administration decided to change the funding formula for section 8 vouchers, drastic cuts were made to the number of vouchers available. These cuts hurt needy families throughout the Nation and throughout my district. We are talking about seniors, low-income families, disabled, the poor, the disadvantaged.

In my district alone, section 8 housing vouchers, public housing units, provide affordable housing for more than 32,000 people. Can you imagine, 32,000 people right now, children and others, that would not have a home, not have a place to rent, that would be homeless if it hadn't been for section 8? This bill reverses the cut and adds an additional 20,000 vouchers so that families are not forced to choose between paying for food, their medication or rent.

We are talking about people that can't afford housing, even right now, with the inflation and the cost that is going on right now. We have got to make sure that they have a home, they have stability, and they have a roof over their head, especially for our children.

I appreciate my colleague on the other side, GARY MILLER, supporting this legislation as well. We worked on some of the amendments. I appreciate that very much.

It also contains key provisions that strengthen section 8 programs, including protection for individuals with limited English proficiency and the expansion to Moving To Work programs. I

urge my colleagues to support this most vulnerable program that helps us, and especially as it pertains to helping the poor, the disadvantaged.

I ask my colleagues to support this legislation.

Mrs. BIGGERT. Mr. Chairman, might I inquire of the time remaining on either side of the aisle?

The CHAIRMAN. The gentlewoman from Illinois has 10½ minutes.

The gentlewoman from California has 9 minutes.

Mrs. BIGGERT. Mr. Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Chairman and Members, I am so very proud of the work of this committee.

I am so very, very pleased and honored to have the opportunity to work with BARNEY FRANK. Not only is he a committed public policy maker, he is smart, and he is creative. And he is helping us to understand how to use this wonderful opportunity that has been afforded to us to do good for the people of this country.

I am so pleased about this particular bill, because I am so keenly aware of the housing crisis that we have in this country.

As we stand here this evening, there are people who are sleeping under bridges; living with them are families, children. Some of them are veterans. I come from a time and place where people did not have decent housing. I know, too, that not only has this occurred for many years in this country, where people have been living in substandard housing, even today we have people without running water. We have people without proper health facilities of any kind in their homes.

We have families that are crowded into one and two rooms. We have people whose roofs were leaking this evening. But because of this government and our ability to help government understand what it can do to help the least fortunate, we are able to pass this kind of legislation.

I want to thank my friends on the opposite side of the aisle, again, Mrs. BIGGERT, for the cooperation that I have enjoyed working with her.

Mr. Chairman, I yield as much time as he may consume to the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. FRANK).

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. I thank the gentlewoman.

Mr. Chairman, again, I want to emphasize, this is a process that began when the Republicans were in power, when Mr. Ney was the chairman.

The gentlewoman from California was the ranking minority member and has continued in her chairmanship. The gentlewoman from Illinois is the ranking member. This is an example of how you can make something better and deliver better, with one exception, there is no additional money in this bill.

I hope that we will succeed in authorizing 20,000 new vouchers. That's an issue we will debate, although it is subject to appropriation, as to whether or not it gets done. I think our appropriator friends would like to do it.

But most of what this does is to improve the delivery. We talk about it a lot. It isn't always done. And in that context, we often thank the staff.

This is a case where the staff of the Financial Services Committee and subcommittee on both sides, we already did a great deal of work; this is a more technical bill than many that have come forward.

This is a less than ideological breakthrough. We hope to have some of those. We have had in the past. It's more a systemic examination of a very large program with improvements of a technical and specific sort in many aspects of it. It took a good deal of hard work, and it took a good deal of mutual cooperation.

As I said, there were some differences, and we will debate those differences, but it should be made clear that those differences come within a context of a broad agreement on making the program better.

There is a lot of talk about waste and fraud and abuse. Waste and fraud and abuse are more generally decried around here than diminished. This is a bill that will make it much less likely that money will be wasted, much less likely that there will be an abuse of the public purse. As I said, let me say in closing, it is to the credit of the gentlewoman from California, the gentlewoman from Illinois, and the people who have worked with them.

Every stakeholder is a supporter of this bill, the landlords, the tenants, the advocacy groups, the housing authorities that administer it. It is rare that you get this degree of agreement. It's a process that began with civil conversation. I am pleased to see, at least on this night, it's going to end with a civil conversation, and the product will be significant improvements in one of the most important social programs in the Federal Government.

Mrs. BIGGERT. Mr. Chairman, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlelady from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE).

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Let me thank the distinguished gentlelady from Illinois for yielding me the time.

Mr. Chairman, this is a historic occasion, a historic time. I want to express my appreciation to the chairman of the full committee, Mr. FRANK, and the chairwoman of the subcommittee, Congresswoman WATERS, and the ranking members, for what I hope will ultimately be an enormous step forward for the homeless and the underserved.

I also want to acknowledge my colleague and friend, Congressman AL GREEN, who has worked so hard to ensure that cities who have the background of Houston, Texas, are also accounted for. Those are cities that have for years had thousands of individuals on the waiting list.

I think the number 25,000 in Houston has literally become a number of the decade, because there has been a waiting list of 25,000 for as long as I can remember, having served on the Houston City Council.

I am very pleased to acknowledge that we are going to reorder the formula so that cities can borrow against moneys that are already in their account, so that the cities that have an excessive number of individuals on the waiting list can still be able to utilize those dollars.

I want to pay special attention to the resources that will be utilized for the disabled and special resources that are going to be utilized for innovative programs dealing with, for example, the housing innovation program, which has previously been Moving to Work.

One of the issues that I hope that we will look forward to is giving incentives to cities to help them reduce the waiting list. Now, you can change the formula, and I had an amendment that would provide at least a pilot study to construct, if you will, an incentive to make sure that cities took advantage of this new structure and worked hard to reduce the waiting list.

It is one thing to have the laws in place. It is another thing to have housing authorities sit by and just watch, rather than working very hard to bring down their list.

I am very grateful that we now have an understanding that there is less and less affordable housing being built in America. These individuals that use section 8 vouchers are working people, people who are paying their taxes, who cannot find housing in high-priced markets. This section 8 voucher program will allow these individuals to purchase homes. They are creative, unique and forward thinking, because they are individuals who have put their stake down in these particular areas.

I am also hoping, as I close, and I am hoping that we will continue to work on this issue, is to ensure individuals will not be put out because of combat pay for soldiers who are coming back.

I ask my colleagues to support this legislation.

Mr. Chairman, I rise in strong support of H.R. 1851, the "Section 8 Voucher Reform Act of 2007." I support this bipartisan measure for three important reasons. First, H.R. 1851 reforms Section 8 vouchers to make their allocation more efficient and targets them based on need. Second, the legislation also increases access for rural families, and expands the number of families receiving housing vouchers. Third, the bill permits families to use housing vouchers as a down payment on a first-time home purchase, and includes other provisions to encourage family self-sufficiency including incentives for families to obtain employment, increase earned income, pursue higher education, and save for retirement.

I wish to express my special thanks to the Chair of the Financial Services Committee, Mr. FRANK, for his leadership and commitment to affordable housing for low and moderate income families. Let me also thank the gentlewoman from California, Ms. WATERS, the Chair

of the Subcommittee on Housing and Community Opportunity for her yeoman work in bringing this important and much needed legislation to the House floor today.

Mr. Chairman, a strong America requires strong families and communities. Affordable housing is critical to maintaining strong families and communities. Section 8 housing vouchers provide vital rental assistance for low-income families, seniors, and the disabled to help them afford housing. The Section 8 housing voucher program contributes to the strengthening of our nation. Let me discuss briefly for our colleagues some of the more beneficial provisions in the legislation.

The legislation eliminates inefficiencies that have resulted in $1.4 billion in unused funds and provides incentives for agencies to use funds to assist more families. Thus, the voucher Funding Formula is made more efficient and will lead to an increase in the number of families receiving vouchers. And that is good because the number of housing vouchers issued has declined more than 150,000 since 2004. The bill authorizes 20,000 incremental vouchers in each of the next five years, for a total of 100,000 new vouchers.

Mr. Chairman, I also support this legislation because it protects tenant rights, promotes home ownership, and encourages economic self-sufficiency for low income voucher and public housing families. The legislation also protects housing agencies adversely affected by formula changes, by allowing them to use voucher reserves in the transition to maintain the number of families being assisted.

Homeownership is promoted because, for the first time, families will be permitted to use housing vouchers as a down-payment on a first-time home purchase, and to use vouchers for purchase of a manufactured home on leased land. Economic self-sufficiency for low income voucher and public housing families is encouraged because H.R. 1851 includes several incentives for families to obtain employment, increase earned income, pursue higher education, and save for retirement. The bill also increases voucher opportunities for lower-income working families in rural areas.

Finally, the bill contains several tenant protections, including provisions to preserve voucher families' ability to move to other areas, to address excessive voucher rent burdens, to provide for more accurate fair market rent calculations, and to protect voucher holders in units that are in need of repair.

Mr. Chairman, for millions of our fellow citizens, finding safe and affordable housing is still a constant and often futile struggle. Today, about 1.4 million households nationwide participate in the voucher program; but not all qualified applicants are guaranteed housing. The demand for housing assistance consistently exceeds the limited resources available from the Department of Housing and Urban Development and local government agencies. Long waiting lists have, unfortunately, become very common.

In my hometown of Houston, the largest city in Texas, and the fourth largest in the United States, there is a multi-year backlog of applications for individuals seeking government assistance. It is not unusual for individuals and families to be placed on the waiting list for more than three years.

I believe it imperative that something be done to reduce this backlog. That is why I offered an amendment to the bill that would establish a pilot program to aid in the reduction of Section 8 waiting list.

Mr. Chairman, I also offered an amendment providing that funds received by a section 8 family from a family member serving in the Armed Forces in a hostile combat theater be excluded from the computation of income for eligibility purposes.

The military is one of Americans most precious resources and one whose efforts ought to never be taken for granted. Daily, these men and women in uniform risk their lives to ensure the national security and safety of our country. One way to express our gratitude to them is to offer relief to their family members.

Eligibility for housing vouchers is typically based on the family size and the total annual gross income, which ought to not exceed 50 percent of the median income for the area in which they choose to live. HUD's Housing Voucher (HCV) handbook lists both special pay (except pay received by a service member who is exposed to hostile fire) and the Base Housing Allowance (BAH) as income for purposes of determining a family's income eligibility. Excluding monies received by section 8 tenants from family members serving in combat zones when evaluating income eligibility for Section 8 housing would provide a little piece of mind to the families of these soldiers serving overseas.

The final amendment I offered sought to provide economic opportunities to Section 8 tenants by requiring the Secretary of the Housing and Urban Development carry out programs whereby public housing agencies develop curriculums and policies designed to increase employment and contracting opportunities for recipients of tenant-based rental assistance under the United States Housing Act of 1937. These economic opportunities can be in the form of maintenance, inspection, and management of rental properties for which rental assistance is provided.

Families living with Section 8 vouchers can achieve self-sufficiency through active participation in education and employment. Self-sufficiency eliminates the need to be dependent on public assistance and increase one's self esteem and sense of accomplishment. My amendment was intended to help section 8 become more economically independent.

But taken as a whole, Mr. Chairman, H.R. 1851 is a very good bill and represents a significant step forward in the direction of an enlightened policy of affordable housing. Accordingly, I strongly support H.R. 1851, the "Section 8 Voucher Reform Act of 2007." I urge my colleagues to join in voting for this much need legislation.

Mrs. BIGGERT. Mr. Chairman, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. GARY G. MILLER).

Mr. GARY G. MILLER of California. Mr. Chairman, we have been working on housing issues for several years. I think we do have a very good job in this House coming to an agreement. Moving to the Senate, for some reason, things just don't happen as they should on that side of the Capitol.

But we have got tremendous housing shortages in this country that we have to deal with. We have to work on HOPE VI program to be more innovative to allow the private sector to get involved. We need to be able to take and move people through the system for public housing section 8 vouchers.

But the area we are really hurting in in this country is the move-up marketplace for people coming out of section 8, coming out of public housing and to be able to move into a house that's affordable. We all have problems in many of our districts where our children go away to college; we know people who, when their kids come back, they can't afford to live in the communities in which they were raised. We know many people who may be a school teacher, a police officer, a fireman, who drive 2 hours back and forth to work because they can't afford to live within the community in which they work. That should be a focus of Congress.

We not only have to deal with the HOPE VI program, we have to deal with the public housing program, the section 8. We have to look at streamlining the system where builders and developers in this country can bring affordable housing on line and make it available for people who are moving out of government assistance into homes of their home.

The Moving To Work program, I think, is going to work very well. It allows people to retain some earnings, to build up the savings to be able to afford to move into a home for the first time. We have a lot of nonprofits in this country that provide down-payment assistance, programs who help people that can afford a payment but don't have the cash on hand within which to be able to put down and pay the closing costs to move into a home.

We have got to look at the overall industry and say, how can we be innovative? How can we be creative? And how can we help people to help themselves? Now, I am a conservative. I don't believe in government programs going on forever. But I think people come to a point in their life where they need a helping hand.

We need to look at ways to help them go on their open to become self-sufficient. That's what I hope we do in Congress, not only look at reforming the government programs we have here today to make them more innovative, make them work for people. In L.A. County, there is a 10-year wait for people to go on vouchers or public housing. That has to change.

People wait for 10 years who are just as needy or more needy sometimes than people who are receiving assistance. But we have no way of moving those people out of government programs into their own homes.

That's what we need to look at, streamlining, removing the red tape, fast tracking, have some nexus between the cost that's assessed against the project and the actual cost of that project.

I want to commend BARNEY FRANK. Over the years, he and I have worked on more legislation on housing I think than any two Members from the Republican and Democrat side together that try to create programs that work for people. Tonight's bill might not be everything they want. I know it's not

everything that MAXINE WATERS and BARNEY FRANK wants, but it was an agreement between the two of us in a bipartisan fashion, Republicans and Democrats, to come and fashion a bill that would work.

I think this bill has some innovation. It makes some changes, and I think it moves us in a better direction. Are we where we should be completely? No, but we are moving in a good direction.

I look forward to cooperation from both sides.

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mrs. BIGGERT. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I might consume.

In closing, I would again like to thank the subcommittee chairwoman, Ms. WATERS, Chairman FRANK and Mr. SHAYS for introducing and working on this bill. I urge my colleagues to support the bill, which received a 52–9 vote coming out of our committee.

The bill we will vote on today is a good bill. It is the result of bipartisan cooperation. It contains many provisions more than in last year's bill that help families dependent upon public assistance become families that are independent and self-sufficient tax-paying productive members of society.

It's my sincere hope that we can further improve the bill, especially the sections involving the funding formula. I thank the chairman for agreeing to work with me on this.

I truly hope that we can move this bill beyond the House during this Congress and that the Senate and the administration will work with us to reform this important program.

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America's families and American children deserve a 21st-century section 8 program.

Mr. Chairman, I urge my colleagues to support this bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Chairman, I would like to take this moment to thank someone who is not here in the Congress with us at this time.

When we first started this legislation in the previous Congress, it was with Mr. Bob Ney who served as chair of the subcommittee; I was the ranking member; and we put this bill out on the floor where it passed this House, and he deserves credit for all the work that was done.

I would also like to thank some of the other members who we have not heard from this evening in general debate and hopefully we will hear from a little later on. Mr. GREEN from Texas who insisted that we expand the vouchers to make them available to the needy families who certainly have been standing in line waiting on section 8 vouchers.

I would like to thank Mr. DAVID SCOTT for being one of the most adamant and fierce defenders of the work that we have done and who has taken on the work of trying to educate some of our Members from the other side of the aisle, not only about the need, but how not to penalize the victims and people who are looking for housing opportunities who would not be able to get them but for section 8 and the work that we are doing.

With that, I would like to close by thanking the chairman who is so committed to helping those who need us most. He is certainly the kind of leader that we can depend on to make sure that everything possible is done, to utilize the time that we have been given in this committee to work for people who oftentimes have been dropped off of America's agenda. Again, he provides strong leadership. He is generous with sharing opportunities with everybody that serves on that committee. And it is because of that kind of leadership and, again, the cooperation from my friends on the opposite side of the aisle, Mrs. BIGGERT, Mr. MILLER, Mr. SHAYS, and others that we come to this floor tonight with a good strong bill that is going to help so very many people in this country, and it is the kind of public policy that makes us all feel very good about being elected officials.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Madam Chairman, I rise today in support of H.R. 1851, to reform the housing choice voucher program under section 8 of the United States Housing Act of 1937. I commend the Honorable MAXINE WATERS for her leadership on this issue of pressing socioeconomic concern.

In 1937, we had a Nation still suffering from the Great Depression. In fact, in 1937, the economy fell into a recession which caused high unemployment and left many wondering how they would put a roof over their family's heads at night. In response to this problem, the United States Housing Act was enacted, which helped hard-working American families to stay off of the streets.

This bill also helped to push the United States policy of spending on infrastructure to help the economy, as promoted by the principles of Keynesian economics. In today's economy we are seeing a new problem emerge—the growing income gap.

According to a January 27, 2007, CNN report entitled, "Mind the gap: Income Inequality, State by State," Americans whose annual income places them in the top 5 percent of the income bracket "saw their incomes rise as much as 132 percent between 1980 and 2003. The bottom 20 percent of families, meanwhile, saw their incomes rise by no more than 24 percent." With such inequality today's housing crisis becomes obvious—the "haves" are purchasing more real-estate and thus driving housing costs to levels far above the budget of "have-nots."

Just as the Federal Government took the lead and helped struggling American families in 1937, we must step in and make sure their efforts are applicable to today's specific housing crisis by amending Section 8 of the United States Housing Act 1937 to address the problems of 2007.

In my district of the Virgin Islands I see multimillion dollar estates constructed in areas of previously low to moderate income. Often times this works to drive up property values and drive out those who can no longer afford to live in the area. It has driven up housing costs and even rental prices. This bill will help address this issue by adding 100,000 new Section 8 vouchers, and by expanding their use for home purchase as well as rent. It will allow a public housing agency to authorize a family in crisis to occupy housing immediately so they are not left on the streets while a slow moving bureaucratic agency "evaluates" them. H.R. 1851 also includes provisions to address existing inadequacies in the programs that have created long waiting lists and a program that has more applicants than available housing.

By passing H.R. 1851, Congress will take a much needed step towards improving a much needed program. I urge my colleagues to support this bill and help make a good program stronger and better.

Mr. ENGEL. Madam Chairman, I rise today in support of H.R. 1851, the Section 8 Voucher Reform Act of 2007. This bill will expand Section 8 Vouchers to improve system efficiency, encourage self-sufficiency, and increase the number of families who can participate. There are currently 20,370 vouchers in use in New York's 17th district which I proudly represent, and 2 million families using vouchers nationwide. These Section 8 Vouchers allow low-income families to choose the housing option that best fits their needs, and encourages permanent economic stability.

According to the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials, there is funding for 150,000 vouchers that are not in use under the current Section 8 Voucher formula. By reforming Section 8 Vouchers, we put funding and vouchers in the hands of people who need them the most.

Madam Chairman, in New York we highly value Section 8 Vouchers housing. The vouchers provide much-needed assistance to families and individuals wishing to become more economically self-sufficient, but who lack the means to do so on their own. Simplifying and expanding Section 8 Vouchers will help alleviate a monumental housing crisis in the state of New York and throughout the country. H.R. 1851 relieves pressure on struggling communities and families and will bring economic security and self-sufficiency within their reach. H.R. 1851 reforms Section 8 Vouchers in a comprehensive and logical way, and I encourage my colleagues to support this important legislation.

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Madam Chairman, today's passage of H.R. 1851, the Section 8 Voucher Act (SERVA) will improve greatly the housing voucher system—which is already successful and has been described by the Administration as one of the federal government's most effective programs.

Safe and affordable housing is one of my priorities and should be a national priority. Section 8 vouchers are a great tool for getting families into decent homes. Studies have shown that Section 8 vouchers reduce homelessness, overcrowding, and frequent moves from apartment to apartment. Affordable housing is critical to strong families and communities, and vouchers have allowed families to move to lower-poverty neighborhoods with better schools and less exposure to crime.

H.R. 1851 will only increase the success of Section 8 vouchers, which currently provides housing assistance to more than 2 million families, by making the program more efficient and more effective. From 2004 to 2006, voucher funds were allocated using a series of

ineffectual formulas that gave some agencies less funding than they needed to cover the costs of their vouchers—forcing them to cut back for needy families—while other agencies were given more funds than they could use. This resulted in $1.4 billion of unused funds and, more importantly, 150,000 more low-income families without vouchers. SERVA would base funding on the actual cost of each agency's vouchers in the previous year. This will allow housing agencies, apartment owners, and families with vouchers to be confident that the program will be funded on a regular basis. Moreover, SERVA will establish incentives encouraging agencies to serve as many families as their funding permits, rather than accumulating large balances of unspent funds.

In addition to establishing such a stable, efficient and equitable voucher funding policy, SERVA will additionally remove barriers to voucher ''portability'', as well as streamline the rules for determining tenants' rent payment. It will authorize 100,000 new vouchers over five years' time, and include provisions to encourage economic self-sufficiency. It will also allow families to use housing vouchers as a down payment on a first-time home purchase, gives a limited number of Public Housing Agencies some flexibility to experiment with development and rent policies, and makes it easier for housing agencies to attach vouchers to housing units. These reforms will provide vital rental assistance for seniors and the disabled as well as low-income families, as well as provide a welcome opportunity for low-income families to achieve the American Dream of home ownership.

By reforming an already highly successful program, we can improve the quality of life for many American families, elderly, and disabled citizen all over the country by offering them more and better choices of communities to live in.

Mr. HINOJOSA. Madam Chairman, I rise in strong support of H.R. 1851, the Section 8 Voucher Reform Act of 2007.

I want to take this opportunity to commend my good friend Congresswoman MAXINE WATERS, chairwoman of the Housing Subcommittee, for introducing this bill, navigating it through the House Committee on Financial Services and bringing this important and necessary piece of legislation to the floor today for consideration by the full House of Representatives.

I have the utmost respect for Chairwoman WATERS—for all that she has done and is doing to improve the housing conditions for Americans, especially the moderate- to low-income, minorities, the disabled and the elderly. She has helped me considerably in my efforts to improve housing conditions in rural America.

Mr. Chairman, while some form of Section 8 rental assistance has been in place since the mid-1970s, the modern program was shaped largely by the 1998 public housing reform act. Nearly 10 years later, the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program came under new scrutiny, with Public Housing Authority industry leaders, low-income housing advocates, and some Members of Congress calling for reforms.

Chairwoman WATERS heeded that call and has brought to the floor today a bill that will help not only the poorest of the poor with housing vouchers but also provide the public housing authorities in my district and across the nation with the tools they need to better serve our constituents. The bill includes significant improvements to the voucher program, which provides rental assistance to about 1.8 million families, the majority of whom are extremely poor.

Applaud the provision in the bill that permits public housing authorities to let families use housing vouchers as a down payment on a first-time home purchase, and the section authorizing 20,000 sorely needed incremental vouchers in each of the next 5 years, for a total of 100,000 new vouchers.

For these reasons and more, I encourage my colleagues to vote in favor of H.R. 1851, the ''Section 8 Voucher Reform Act of 2007.''

Mr. CONYERS. Madam Chairman, I regret that I will be unable to vote ''yes'' tonight for passage of H.R. 1851. I was scheduled to be in Detroit in order to receive the NAACP's most prestigious award, the ''Spingarn award.'' I applaud the vision, courage and compassion of Representative MAXINE WATERS for introducing the ''Section 8 Voucher Reform Act of 2007, H.R. 1851.'' I strongly support the legislation, because it expands Section 8 vouchers for working families in America who are in desperate need of affordable housing by creating 20,000 incremental Section 8 vouchers in each of the next 5 years for a total of 100,000 new vouchers.

In a nation where affordable housing is scarce, and family homeless shelters continue to be built across the nation, passage of H.R. 1851 is a vitally important step in having the Federal Government take the lead in expanding affordable housing for deserving families and children in America. There are approximately 16,000 individuals and families who are currently on the Detroit Public Housing Waiting List. H.R. 1851 will help reduce the affordable housing crisis in Detroit, by increasing the availability of housing units through the expansion of Section 8 housing. It clearly does not make sense, nor is it fair, to have apartments available for rent in Detroit, but not enough citizens to move into them, only because there have not been a sufficient supply of Section 8 vouchers in the past.

H.R. 1851 also changes rent calculation, recertification, and inspection rules for the voucher, public housing, and project based Section 8 programs, to reduce costs and compliance burdens for public housing agencies, landlords, and families. These changes are made while maintaining rules that target scarce resources to those families most in need and while maintaining rent calculation rules that ensure rents are affordable. This will mean that Section 8 apartments will now become more affordable due to changes in rent calculation formulas mandated in H.R. 1851.

H.R. 1851 also permits public housing agencies across this country to allow families in need of affordable housing to use a Section 8 housing voucher as a down payment on a first time home purchase. Passage of this legislation means scores of working families in Detroit, many who have saved and sacrificed the entire lives to buy a home, will be now able to do so.

The ''Section 8 Voucher Reform Act of 2007, H.R. 1851.'' Is a critically important piece of legislation because it reforms HUD Section 8 guidelines to ensure that the approximately $1.4 billion in unused Section 8 funds will now be spent. This legislation mandates reforms in the Section 8 program that will eliminate inefficiencies, streamline paper work, and provide more incentives for public housing agencies to assist more families who qualify for Section 8 housing.

Having an additional $1.4 billion dollars to be used for Section 8 housing vouchers means that there will be a substantial increase in families in Detroit who will live in safe and decent affordable housing. There are too many working families in Detroit, and across this nation, who are living in homeless shelters, expensive inner city hotels, and staying with friends and relatives until they can locate housing. This is a moral outrage. All Americans deserve safe, decent, and affordable permanent housing.

Under the leadership of Representative MAXINE WATERS, passage of H.R. 1851 shows how we as Democrats have always had a historical commitment to expanding affordable housing to working families, and will continue to do so.

If we are to be a truly compassionate and moral nation, all individuals and families, regardless of income, race, or employment status must have as a fundamental human and civil right safe, decent, and affordable housing. Passage of H.R. 1851 is a critically important piece of legislation that will move America closer to this goal. Now, 100,000 additional Americans will have the opportunity to either become home owners, or move into an apartment, something that we can all agree on should be one of the highest priorities of this Nation.

Ms. WATERS. Madam Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIRMAN (Ms. BALDWIN). All time for general debate has expired.

Pursuant to the rule, the amendment in the nature of a substitute printed in the bill shall be considered as an original bill for the purpose of amendment under the 5-minute rule and shall be considered read.

The text of the committee amendment is as follows:

H.R. 1851

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''Section 8 Voucher Reform Act of 2007''.

SEC. 2. INSPECTION OF DWELLING UNITS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 8(o)(8) of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437f(o)(8)) is amended—

(1) by striking subparagraph (A) and inserting the following new subparagraph:

''(A) INITIAL INSPECTION.—

''(i) IN GENERAL.—For each dwelling unit for which a housing assistance payment contract is established under this subsection, the public housing agency (or other entity pursuant to paragraph (11)) shall inspect the unit before any assistance payment is made to determine whether the dwelling unit meets the housing quality standards under subparagraph (B), except as provided in clause (ii) or (iii) of this subparagraph.

''(ii) CORRECTION OF NON-LIFE THREATENING CONDITIONS.—In the case of any dwelling unit that is determined, pursuant to an inspection under clause (i), not to meet the housing quality standards under subparagraph (B), assistance payments may be made for the unit notwithstanding subparagraph (C) if failure to meet such standards is a result only of non-life threatening conditions. A public housing agency

making assistance payments pursuant to this clause for a dwelling unit shall, 30 days after the beginning of the period for which such payments are made, suspend any assistance payments for the unit if any deficiency resulting in noncompliance with the housing quality standards has not been corrected by such time, and may not resume such payments until each such deficiency has been corrected.

''(iii) PROJECTS RECEIVING CERTAIN FEDERAL HOUSING SUBSIDIES.—In the case of any property that within the previous 12 months has been determined to meet housing quality and safety standards under any Federal housing program inspection standard, including the program under section 42 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 or under subtitle A of title II of the Cranston Gonzalez National Affordable Housing Act of 1990, a public housing agency may authorize occupancy before the inspection under clause (i) has been completed, and may make assistance payments retroactive to the beginning of the lease term after the unit has been determined pursuant to an inspection under clause (i) to meet the housing quality standards under subparagraph (B).'';

(2) by striking subparagraph (D) and inserting the following new subparagraph:

''(D) BIENNIAL INSPECTIONS.—

''(i) REQUIREMENT.—Each public housing agency providing assistance under this subsection (or other entity, as provided in paragraph (11)) shall, for each assisted dwelling unit, make biennial inspections during the term of the housing assistance payments contract for the unit to determine whether the unit is maintained in accordance with the requirements under subparagraph (A). The agency (or other entity) shall retain the records of the inspection for a reasonable time and shall make the records available upon request to the Secretary, the Inspector General for the Department of Housing and Urban Development, and any auditor conducting an audit under section 5(h).

''(ii) SUFFICIENT INSPECTION.—An inspection of a property shall be sufficient to comply with the inspection requirement under clause (i) if—

''(I) the inspection was conducted pursuant to requirements under a Federal, State, or local housing assistance program (including the HOME investment partnerships program under title II of the Cranston-Gonzalez National Affordable Housing Act (42 U.S.C. 12721 et seq.)); and

''(II) pursuant to such inspection, the property was determined to meet the standards or requirements regarding housing quality or safety applicable to units assisted under such program, and, if a non-Federal standard was used, the public housing agency has certified to the Secretary that such standards or requirements provide the same protection to occupants of dwelling units meeting such standards or requirements as, or greater protection than, the housing quality standards under subparagraph (B).''; and

(3) by adding at the end the following new subparagraph:

''(F) ENFORCEMENT OF HOUSING QUALITY STANDARDS.—

''(i) DETERMINATION OF NONCOMPLIANCE.—A dwelling unit that is covered by a housing assistance payments contract under this subsection shall be considered, for purposes of this subparagraph, to be in noncompliance with the housing quality standards under subparagraph (B) if—

''(I) the public housing agency or an inspector authorized by the State or unit of local government determines upon inspection of the unit that the unit fails to comply with such standards;

''(II) the agency or inspector notifies the owner of the unit in writing of such failure to comply; and

''(III) the failure to comply is not corrected within 90 days after receipt of such notice.

''(ii) WITHHOLDING AND RELEASE OF ASSISTANCE AMOUNTS.—The public housing agency shall withhold all of the assistance amounts under this subsection with respect to a dwelling unit that is in noncompliance with housing quality standards under subparagraph (B). Subject to clause (iii), the agency shall promptly release any withheld amounts to the owner of the dwelling unit upon completion of repairs that remedy such noncompliance.

''(iii) USE OF WITHHELD ASSISTANCE TO PAY FOR REPAIRS.—The public housing agency may use such amounts withheld to make repairs to the dwelling unit or to contract to have repairs made (or to contract with an inspector referred to in clause (i)(I) to make or contract for such repairs), and shall subtract the cost of such repairs from any amounts released to the owner of the unit upon remedying such noncompliance.

''(iv) PROTECTION OF TENANTS.—An owner of a dwelling unit may not terminate the tenancy of any tenant or refuse to renew a lease for such unit because of the withholding of assistance pursuant to this subparagraph.

''(v) TERMINATION OF LEASE OR ASSISTANCE PAYMENTS CONTRACT.—If assistance amounts under this section for a dwelling unit are withheld pursuant to clause (ii) and the owner does not correct the noncompliance before the expiration of the lease for the dwelling unit and such lease is not renewed, the Secretary shall recapture any such amounts from the public housing agency.

''(vi) APPLICABILITY.—This subparagraph shall apply to any dwelling unit for which a housing assistance payments contract is entered into or renewed after the date of the effectiveness of the regulations implementing this subparagraph.''.

(b) REGULATIONS.—The Secretary of Housing and Urban Development shall issue any regulations necessary to carry out the amendment made by subsection (a)(3) not later than the expiration of the 12-month period beginning upon the date of the enactment of this Act. Such regulations shall take effect not later than the expiration of the 90-day period beginning upon such issuance. This subsection shall take effect upon enactment of this Act.

SEC. 3. RENT REFORM AND INCOME REVIEWS.

(a) RENT FOR PUBLIC HOUSING AND SECTION 8 PROGRAMS.—Section 3 of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437a(a)) is amended—

(1) in subsection (a)—

(A) in paragraph (1) by inserting ''LOW-INCOME OCCUPANCY REQUIREMENT AND RENTAL PAYMENTS.—'' after ''(1)''; and

(B) by adding at the end the following new paragraphs:

''(6) REVIEWS OF FAMILY INCOME.—

''(A) FREQUENCY.—Reviews of family income for purposes of this section shall be made—

''(i) in the case of all families, upon the initial provision of housing assistance for the family;

''(ii) annually thereafter, except as provided in subparagraph (B)(i);

''(iii) upon the request of the family, at any time the income or deductions (under subsection (b)(5)) of the family change by an amount that is estimated to result in a decrease of $1,500 (or such lower amount as the public housing agency may, at the option of the agency or owner, establish) or more in annual adjusted income; and

''(iv) at any time the income or deductions (under subsection (b)(5)) of the family change by an amount that is estimated to result in an increase of $1,500 or more in annual adjusted income, except that any increase in the earned income of a family shall not be considered for purposes of this clause (except that earned income may be considered if the increase corresponds to previous decreases under clause (iii)), except that a public housing agency or owner may elect not to conduct such review in the last three months of a certification period.

''(B) FIXED-INCOME FAMILIES.—

''(i) SELF CERTIFICATION AND 3-YEAR REVIEW.—In the case of any family described in clause (ii), after the initial review of the family's income pursuant to subparagraph (A)(i), the public housing agency or owner shall not be required to conduct a review of the family's income pursuant to subparagraph (A)(ii) for any year for which such family certifies, in accordance with such requirements as the Secretary shall establish, that the income of the family meets the requirements of clause (ii) of this subparagraph, except that the public housing agency or owner shall conduct a review of each such family's income not less than once every 3 years.

''(ii) ELIGIBLE FAMILIES.—A family described in this clause is a family who has an income, as of the most recent review pursuant to subparagraph (A) or clause (i) of this subparagraph, of which 90 percent or more consists of fixed income, as such term is defined in clause (iii).

''(iii) FIXED INCOME.—For purposes of this subparagraph, the term 'fixed income' includes income from—

''(I) the supplemental security income program under title XVI of the Social Security Act, including supplementary payments pursuant to an agreement for Federal administration under section 1616(a) of the Social Security Act and payments pursuant to an agreement entered into under section 212(b) of Public Law 93–66;

''(II) Social Security payments;

''(III) Federal, State, local and private pension plans; and

''(IV) other periodic payments received from annuities, insurance policies, retirement funds, disability or death benefits, and other similar types of periodic receipts.

''(C) IN GENERAL.—Reviews of family income for purposes of this section shall be subject to the provisions of section 904 of the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Amendments Act of 1988.

''(7) CALCULATION OF INCOME.—

''(A) USE OF PRIOR YEAR'S INCOME.—Except as otherwise provided in this paragraph, in determining the income of a family for a year, a public housing agency or owner may use the income of the family as determined by the agency or owner for the preceding year, taking into consideration any redetermination of income during such prior year pursuant to clause (iii) or (iv) of paragraph (6)(A).

''(B) EARNED INCOME.—For purposes of this section, the earned income of a family for a year shall be the amount of earned income by the family in the prior year minus an amount equal to 10 percent of the lesser of such prior year's earned income or $10,000, except that the income of a family for purposes of section 16 (relating to eligibility for assisted housing and income mix) shall be determined without regard to any reduction under this subparagraph.

''(C) INFLATIONARY ADJUSTMENT FOR FIXED INCOME FAMILIES.—If, for any year, a public housing agency or owner determines the income for any family described in paragraph (6)(B)(ii), or the amount of fixed income of any other family, based on the prior year's income or fixed income, respectively, pursuant to subparagraph (A), such prior year's income or fixed income, respectively, shall be adjusted by applying an inflationary factor as the Secretary shall, by regulation, establish.

''(D) OTHER INCOME.—If, for any year, a public housing agency or owner determines the income for any family based on the prior year's income, with respect to prior year calculations of types of income not subject to subparagraph (B), a public housing agency or owner may make other adjustments as it considers appropriate to reflect current income.

''(E) SAFE HARBOR.—A public housing agency or owner may, to the extent such information is available to the public housing agency or owner, determine the family's income for purposes of this section based on timely income determinations made for purposes of other means-tested Federal public assistance programs (including the program for block grants to States for temporary assistance for needy families

under part A of title IV of the Social Security Act, a program for medicaid assistance under a State plan approved under title XIX of the Social Security Act, and the food stamp program as defined in section 3(h) of the Food Stamp Act of 1977. The Secretary shall, in consultation with other appropriate Federal agencies, develop procedures to enable public housing agencies and owners to have access to such income determinations made by other Federal programs.

''(F) PHA AND OWNER COMPLIANCE.—A public housing agency or owner may not be considered to fail to comply with this paragraph or paragraph (6) due solely to any de minimus errors made by the agency or owner in calculating family incomes.'';

(2) by striking subsections (d) and (e); and

(3) by redesignating subsection (f) as subsection (d).

(b) INCOME.—Section 3(b) of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437a(b)) is amended—

(1) by striking paragraph (4) and inserting the following new paragraph:

''(4) INCOME.—The term 'income' means, with respect to a family, income received from all sources by each member of the household who is 18 years of age or older or is the head of household or spouse of the head of the household, plus unearned income by or on behalf of each dependent who is less than 18 years of age, as determined in accordance with criteria prescribed by the Secretary, in consultation with the Secretary of Agriculture, subject to the following requirements:

''(A) INCLUDED AMOUNTS.—Such term includes recurring gifts and receipts, actual income from assets, and profit or loss from a business.

''(B) EXCLUDED AMOUNTS.—Such term does not include—

''(i) any imputed return on assets; and

''(ii) any amounts that would be eligible for exclusion under section 1613(a)(7) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1382b(a)(7)).

''(C) EARNED INCOME OF STUDENTS.—Such term does not include earned income of any dependent earned during any period that such dependent is attending school on a full-time basis or any grant-in-aid or scholarship amounts related to such attendance used for the cost of tuition or books.

''(D) EDUCATIONAL SAVINGS ACCOUNTS.—Income shall be determined without regard to any amounts in or from, or any benefits from, any Coverdell education savings account under section 530 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 or any qualified tuition program under section 529 of such Code.

''(E) OTHER EXCLUSIONS.—Such term shall not include other exclusions from income as are established by the Secretary or any amount required by Federal law to be excluded from consideration as income. The Secretary may not require a public housing agency or owner to maintain records of any amounts excluded from income pursuant to this subparagraph.''; and

(2) by striking paragraph (5) and inserting the following new paragraph:

''(5) ADJUSTED INCOME.—The term 'adjusted income' means, with respect to a family, the amount (as determined by the public housing agency or owner) of the income of the members of the family residing in a dwelling unit or the persons on a lease, after any deductions from income as follows:

''(A) ELDERLY AND DISABLED FAMILIES.—$725 in the case of any family that is an elderly family or a disabled family.

''(B) DEPENDENTS.—In the case of any family that includes a member or members who—

''(i) are less than 18 years of age or attending school or vocational training on a full-time basis; or

''(ii) is a person with disabilities who is 18 years of age or older and resides in the household,

$500 for each such member.

''(C) HEALTH AND MEDICAL EXPENSES.—The amount, if any, by which 10 percent of annual family income is exceeded by the sum of—

''(i) in the case of any elderly or disabled family, any unreimbursed health and medical care expenses; and

''(ii) any unreimbursed reasonable attendant care and auxiliary apparatus expenses for each handicapped member of the family, to the extent necessary to enable any member of such family to be employed.

''(D) PERMISSIVE DEDUCTIONS.—Such additional deductions as a public housing agency may, at its discretion, establish, except that the Secretary shall establish procedures to ensure that such deductions do not increase Federal expenditures.

The Secretary shall annually adjust the amounts of the exclusions under subparagraphs (A) and (B), as such amounts may have been previously adjusted, by applying an inflationary factor as the Secretary shall, by regulation, establish. If the dollar amount of any such exclusion determined for any year by applying such inflationary factor is not a multiple of $25, the Secretary shall round such amount to the next lowest multiple of $25.''.

(c) HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER PROGRAM.—Paragraph (5) of section 8(o) of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437f(o)(5)) is amended—

(1) in the paragraph heading, by striking ''ANNUAL REVIEW'' and inserting ''REVIEWS'';

(2) in subparagraph (A)—

(A) by striking ''the provisions of'' and inserting ''paragraphs (6) and (7) of section 3(a) and to''; and

(B) by striking ''and shall be conducted upon the initial provision of housing assistance for the family and thereafter not less than annually''; and

(3) in subparagraph (B), by striking the second sentence.

(d) ENHANCED VOUCHER PROGRAM.—Section 8(t)(1)(D) of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437f(t)(1)(D)) is amended by striking ''income'' each place such term appears and inserting ''annual adjusted income''.

(e) PROJECT-BASED HOUSING.—Paragraph (3) of section 8(c) of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437f(c)(3)) is amended by striking the last sentence.

(f) IMPACT ON PUBLIC HOUSING REVENUES.—

(1) INTERACTION WITH ASSET MANAGEMENT RULE.—If the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development determines that the application of the amendments made by this section results in a reduction in the rental income of a public housing agency that is not de minimus during the period that the operating formula income is frozen at a level that does not fully reflect the changes made by such amendments, the Secretary shall make appropriate adjustments in the formula income of the agency.

(2) HUD REPORTS ON PUBLIC HOUSING REVENUE IMPACT.—For each of fiscal years 2008 and 2009, the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development shall submit a report to Congress identifying and calculating the impact of changes made by the amendments made by this section on the revenues and costs of operating public housing units.

(g) EFFECTIVE DATE AND TRANSITION.—The amendments made by this section shall apply with respect to fiscal year 2008 and fiscal years thereafter.

SEC. 4. ELIGIBILITY FOR ASSISTANCE BASED ON ASSETS AND INCOME.

(a) ASSETS.—Section 16 of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437n) is amended by inserting after subsection (d) the following new subsection:

''(e) ELIGIBILITY FOR ASSISTANCE BASED ON ASSETS.—

''(1) LIMITATION ON ASSETS.—Subject to paragraph (3) and notwithstanding any other provision of this Act, a dwelling unit assisted under this Act may not be rented and assistance under this Act may not be provided, either initially or at each recertification of family income, to any family—

''(A) whose net family assets exceed $100,000, as such amount is adjusted annually by applying an inflationary factor as the Secretary considers appropriate; or

''(B) who has a present ownership interest in, and a legal right to reside in, real property that is suitable for occupancy as a residence, except that the prohibition under this subparagraph shall not apply to—

''(i) any property for which the family is receiving assistance under this Act;

''(ii) any person that is a victim of domestic violence; or

''(iii) any family that is making a good faith effort to sell such property.

''(2) NET FAMILY ASSETS.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—For purposes of this subsection, the term 'net family assets' means, for all members of the household, the net cash value of all assets after deducting reasonable costs that would be incurred in disposing of real property, savings, stocks, bonds, and other forms of capital investment. Such term does not include interests in Indian trust land, equity accounts in homeownership programs of the Department of Housing and Urban Development, or Family Self Sufficiency accounts.

''(B) EXCLUSIONS.—Such term does not include—

''(i) the value of personal property, except for items of personal property of significant value, as the public housing agency may determine;

''(ii) the value of any retirement account;

''(iii) any amounts recovered in any civil action or settlement based on a claim of malpractice, negligence, or other breach of duty owed to a member of the family and arising out of law, that resulted in a member of the family being disabled (under the meaning given such term in section 1614 of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1382c)); and

''(iv) the value of any Coverdell education savings account under section 530 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 or any qualified tuition program under section 529 of such Code.

''(C) TRUST FUNDS.—In cases where a trust fund has been established and the trust is not revocable by, or under the control of, any member of the family or household, the value of the trust fund shall not be considered an asset of a family if the fund continues to be held in trust. Any income distributed from the trust fund shall be considered income for purposes of section 3(b) and any calculations of annual family income, except in the case of medical expenses for a minor.

''(D) SELF-CERTIFICATION.—A public housing agency or owner may determine the net assets of a family, for purposes of this section, based on the amounts reported by the family at the time the agency or owner reviews the family's income.

''(3) COMPLIANCE FOR PUBLIC HOUSING DWELLING UNITS.—When recertifying family income with respect to families residing in public housing dwelling units, a public housing agency may, in the discretion of the agency and only pursuant to a policy that is set forth in the public housing agency plan under section 5A for the agency, choose not to enforce the limitation under paragraph (1).

''(4) AUTHORITY TO DELAY EVICTIONS.—In the case of a family residing in a dwelling unit assisted under this Act who does not comply with the limitation under paragraph (1), the public housing agency or project owner may delay eviction or termination of the family based on such noncompliance for a period of not more than 6 months.''.

(b) INCOME.—The United States Housing Act of 1937 is amended—

(1) in section 3(a)(1) (42 U.S.C. 1437a(a)(1)), by striking the first sentence and inserting the following: ''Dwelling units assisted under this Act

may be rented, and assistance under this Act may be provided, whether initially or at time of recertification, only to families who are low-income families at the time such initial or continued assistance, respectively, is provided, except that families residing in dwelling units as of the date of the enactment of the Section 8 Voucher Reform Act of 2007 that, under agreements in effect on such date of enactment, may have incomes up to 95 percent of local area median income shall continue to be eligible for assistance at recertification as long as they continue to comply with such income restrictions. When recertifying family income with respect to families residing in public housing dwelling units, a public housing agency may, in the discretion of the agency and only pursuant to a policy that is set forth in the public housing agency plan under section 5A for the agency, choose not to enforce the prohibition under the preceding sentence. When recertifying family income with respect to families residing in dwelling units for which project-based assistance is provided, a project owner may, in the owner's discretion and only pursuant to a policy adopted by such owner, choose not to enforce such prohibition. In the case of a family residing in a dwelling unit assisted under this Act who does not comply with the prohibition under the first sentence of this paragraph, the public housing agency or project owner may delay eviction or termination of the family based on such noncompliance for a period of not more than 6 months.'';

(2) in section 8(o)(4) (42 U.S.C. 1437f(o)(4)), by striking the matter preceding subparagraph (A) and inserting the following:

''(4) ELIGIBLE FAMILIES.—Assistance under this subsection may be provided, whether initially or at each recertification, only pursuant to subsection (t) to a family eligible for assistance under such subsection or to a family who at the time of such initial or continued assistance, respectively, is a low-income family that is—''; and

(3) in section 8(c)(4) (42 U.S.C. 1437f(c)(4)), by striking ''at the time it initially occupied such dwelling unit'' and inserting ''according to the restrictions under section 3(a)(1)''.

SEC. 5. TARGETING ASSISTANCE TO LOW-INCOME WORKING FAMILIES.

(a) VOUCHERS.—Section 16(b)(1) of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437n(b)(1)) is amended—

(1) by inserting after ''do not exceed'' the following: ''the higher of (A) the poverty line (as such term is defined in section 673 of the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1981 (42 U.S.C. 9902), including any revision required by such section) applicable to a family of the size involved, or (B)''; and

(2) by inserting before the period at the end the following: ''; and except that clause (A) of this sentence shall not apply in the case of families residing in Puerto Rico or any other territory or possession of the United States''.

(b) PUBLIC HOUSING.—Section 16(a)(2)(A) of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437n(a)(2)(A)) is amended—

(1) by inserting after ''do not exceed'' the following: ''the higher of (i) the poverty line (as such term is defined in section 673 of the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1981 (42 U.S.C. 9902), including any revision required by such section) applicable to a family of the size involved, or (ii)''; and

(2) by inserting before the period at the end the following: ''; and except that clause (i) of this sentence shall not apply in the case of families residing in Puerto Rico or any other territory or possession of the United States''.

(c) PROJECT-BASED SECTION 8 ASSISTANCE.—Section 16(c)(3) of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437n(c)(3)) is amended—

(1) by inserting after ''do not exceed'' the following: ''the higher of (A) the poverty line (as such term is defined in section 673 of the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1981 (42 U.S.C. 9902), including any revision required by such section) applicable to a family of the size involved, or (B)''; and

(2) by inserting before the period at the end the following: ''; and except that clause (A) of this sentence shall not apply in the case of families residing in Puerto Rico or any other territory or possession of the United States''.

SEC. 6. VOUCHER RENEWAL FUNDING.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 8 of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437f) is amended by striking subsection (dd) and inserting the following new subsection:

''(dd) TENANT-BASED VOUCHERS.—

''(1) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There are authorized to be appropriated, for each of fiscal years 2008 through 2012, such sums as may be necessary for tenant-based assistance under subsection (o) for the following purposes:

''(A) To renew all expiring annual contributions contracts for tenant-based rental assistance.

''(B) To provide tenant-based rental assistance for—

''(i) relocation and replacement of housing units that are demolished or disposed of pursuant to the Omnibus Consolidated Rescissions and Appropriations Act of 1996 (Public Law 104–134);

''(ii) conversion of section 23 projects to assistance under this section;

''(iii) the family unification program under subsection (x) of this section;

''(iv) relocation of witnesses in connection with efforts to combat crime in public and assisted housing pursuant to a request from a law enforcement or prosecution agency;

''(v) enhanced vouchers authorized under subsection (t) of this section;

''(vi) vouchers in connection with the HOPE VI program under section 24;

''(vii) demolition or disposition of public housing units pursuant to section 18 of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437p);

''(viii) mandatory and voluntary conversions of public housing to vouchers, pursuant to sections 33 and 22 of the United States Housing Act of 1937, respectively (42 U.S.C. 1437z–5, 1437t);

''(ix) vouchers necessary to comply with a consent decree or court order;

''(x) vouchers to replace dwelling units that cease to receive project-based assistance under subsection (b), (c), (d), (e), or (v) of this section;

''(xi) tenant protection assistance, including replacement and relocation assistance; and

''(xii) emergency voucher assistance for the protection of victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking.

Subject only to the availability of sufficient amounts provided in appropriation Acts, the Secretary shall provide tenant-based rental assistance to replace all dwelling units that cease to be available as assisted housing as a result of clause (i), (ii), (v), (vi), (vii), (viii), or (x).

''(2) ALLOCATION OF RENEWAL FUNDING AMONG PUBLIC HOUSING AGENCIES.—

''(A) From amounts appropriated for each year pursuant to paragraph (1)(A), the Secretary shall provide renewal funding for each public housing agency—

''(i) based on leasing and cost data from the preceding calendar year, as adjusted by an annual adjustment factor to be established by the Secretary, which shall be established using the smallest geographical areas for which data on changes in rental costs are annually available;

''(ii) by making any adjustments necessary to provide for the first-time renewal of vouchers funded under paragraph (1)(B);

''(iii) by making any adjustments necessary for full year funding of vouchers ported in the prior calendar year under subsection (r)(2); and

''(iv) by making such other adjustments as the Secretary considers appropriate, including adjustments necessary to address changes in voucher utilization rates and voucher costs related to natural and other major disasters.

''(B) LEASING AND COST DATA.—For purposes of subparagraph (A)(i), leasing and cost data shall be calculated annually by using the average for the preceding calendar year. Such leasing and cost data shall be adjusted to include vouchers that were set aside under a commitment to provide project-based assistance under subsection (o)(13) and to exclude amounts funded through advances under paragraph (3). Such leasing and cost data shall not include funds not appropriated for tenant-based assistance under section 8(o), unless the agency's funding was prorated in the prior year and the agency used other funds to maintain vouchers in use.

''(C) OVERLEASING.—For the purpose of determining allocations under subsection (A)(i), the leasing rate calculated for the prior calendar year may exceed an agency's authorized voucher level, except that such calculation in 2009 shall not include amounts resulting from a leasing rate in excess of 103 percent of an agency's authorized vouchers in 2008 which results from the use of accumulated amounts, as referred to in paragraph (4)(A).

''(D) MOVING TO WORK; HOUSING INNOVATION PROGRAM.—Notwithstanding subparagraphs (A) and (B), each public housing agency participating at any time in the moving to work demonstration under section 204 of the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development, and Independent Agencies Appropriations Act, 1996 (42 U.S.C. 1437f note) or in the housing innovation program under section 36 of this Act shall be funded pursuant to its agreement under such program and shall be subject to any pro rata adjustment made under subparagraph (E)(i).

''(E) PRO RATA ALLOCATION.—

''(i) INSUFFICIENT FUNDS.—To the extent that amounts made available for a fiscal year are not sufficient to provide each public housing agency with the full allocation for the agency determined pursuant to subparagraphs (A) and (D), the Secretary shall reduce such allocation for each agency on a pro rata basis, except that renewal funding of enhanced vouchers under section 8(t) shall not be subject to such proration.

''(ii) EXCESS FUNDS.—To the extent that amounts made available for a fiscal year exceed the amount necessary to provide each housing agency with the full allocation for the agency determined pursuant to subparagraphs (A) and (D), such excess amounts shall be used for the purposes specified in subparagraphs (B) and (C) of paragraph (4).

''(F) PROMPT FUNDING ALLOCATION.—The Secretary shall allocate all funds under this subsection for each year before the latter of (i) February 15, or (ii) the expiration of the 45-day period beginning upon the enactment of the appropriations Act funding such renewals.

''(3) ADVANCES.—

''(A) AUTHORITY.—During the last 3 months of each calendar year, the Secretary shall provide amounts to any public housing agency, at the request of the agency, in an amount up to two percent of the allocation for the agency for such calendar year, subject to subparagraph (C).

''(B) USE.—Amounts advanced under subparagraph (A) may be used to pay for additional voucher costs, including costs related to temporary overleasing.

''(C) USE OF PRIOR YEAR AMOUNTS.—During the last 3 months of a calendar year, if amounts previously provided to a public housing agency for tenant-based assistance for such year or for previous years remain unobligated and available to the agency—

''(i) the agency shall exhaust such amounts to cover any additional voucher costs under subparagraph (B) before amounts advanced under subparagraph (A) may be so used; and

''(ii) the amount that may be advanced under subparagraph (A) to the agency shall be reduced by an amount equal to the total of such previously provided and unobligated amounts.

''(D) REPAYMENT.—Amounts advanced under subparagraph (A) in a calendar year shall be repaid to the Secretary in the subsequent calendar

year by reducing the amounts made available for such agency for such subsequent calendar year pursuant to allocation under paragraph (2) by an amount equal to the amount so advanced to the agency.

''(4) RECAPTURE.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall recapture, from amounts provided under the annual contributions contract for a public housing agency for a calendar year, all accumulated amounts allocated under paragraph (2) and from previous years that are unused by the agency at the end of each calendar year except—

''(i) with respect to the recapture under this subparagraph at the end of 2007, an amount equal to one twelfth the amount allocated to the public housing agency for such year pursuant to paragraph (2)(A); and

''(ii) with respect to the recapture under this subparagraph at the end of each of 2008, 2009, 2010, and 2011, an amount equal to 5 percent of such amount allocated to the agency for such year. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, each public housing agency may retain all amounts not authorized to be recaptured under this subparagraph, and may use such amounts for all authorized purposes.

''(B) REALLOCATION.—Not later than May 1 of each calendar year, the Secretary shall—

''(i) calculate the aggregate unused amounts for the preceding year recaptured pursuant to subparagraph (A);

''(ii) set aside and make available such amounts as the Secretary considers appropriate to reimburse public housing agencies for increased costs related to portability and family self-sufficiency activities during such year; and

''(iii) reallocate all remaining amounts among public housing agencies, with priority given based on the extent to which an agency has utilized the amount allocated under paragraph (2) for the agency to serve eligible families.

''(C) USE.—Amounts reallocated to a public housing agency pursuant to subparagraph (B)(iii) may be used only to increase voucher leasing rates as provided under paragraph (2)(C).''.

(b) ABSORPTION OF VOUCHERS FROM OTHER AGENCIES.—Section 8(r)(2) of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437f(r)(2)) is amended by adding after the period at the end the following: ''The agency shall absorb the family into its program for voucher assistance under this section and shall have priority to receive additional funding from the Secretary for the housing assistance provided for such family from amounts made available pursuant to subsection (dd)(4)(B).''

(c) VOUCHERS FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES.—The Secretary of Housing and Urban Development shall develop and issue, to public housing agencies that received voucher assistance under section 8(o) for non-elderly disabled families pursuant to appropriations Acts for fiscal years 1997 through 2002, guidance to ensure that, to the maximum extent practicable, such vouchers continue to be provided upon turnover to qualified non-elderly disabled families.

SEC. 7. ADMINISTRATIVE FEES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 8(q) of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437f(q)) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1), by striking subparagraphs (B) and (C) and inserting the following new subparagraphs:

''(B) CALCULATION.—The fee under this subsection shall—

''(i) be payable to each public housing agency for each month for which a dwelling unit is covered by an assistance contract;

''(ii) until superseded through subsequent rulemaking, be based on the per-unit fee payable to the agency in fiscal year 2003, updated for each subsequent year as specified in subsection (iv);

''(iii) include an amount for the cost of issuing voucher to new participants;

''(iv) be updated each year using an index of changes in wage data or other objectively measurable data that reflect the costs of administering the program for such assistance, as determined by the Secretary; and

''(v) include an amount for the cost of family self-sufficiency coordinators, as provided in section 23(h)(1).

''(C) PUBLICATION.—The Secretary shall cause to be published in the Federal Register the fee rate for each geographic area.''; and

(2) in paragraph (4), by striking ''1999'' and inserting ''2007''.

(b) ADMINISTRATIVE FEES FOR FAMILY SELF-SUFFICIENCY PROGRAM COSTS.—Subsection (h) of section 23 of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437u(h)) is amended by striking paragraph (1) and inserting the following new paragraph:

''(1) SECTION 8 FEES.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall establish a fee under section 8(q) for the costs incurred in administering the self-sufficiency program under this section to assist families receiving voucher assistance through section 8(o).

''(B) ELIGIBILITY FOR FEE.—The fee shall provide funding for family self-sufficiency coordinators as follows:

''(i) BASE FEE.—A public housing agency serving 25 or more participants in the family self-sufficiency program under this section shall receive a fee equal to the costs of employing one full-time family self-sufficiency coordinator. An agency serving fewer than 25 such participants shall receive a prorated fee.

''(ii) ADDITIONAL FEE.—An agency that meets minimum performance standards shall receive an additional fee sufficient to cover the costs of employing a second family self-sufficiency coordinator if the agency has 75 or more participating families, and a third such coordinator if it has 125 or more participating families.

''(iii) PREVIOUSLY FUNDED AGENCIES.—An agency that received funding from the Department of Housing and Urban Development for more than three such coordinators in any of fiscal years 1998 through 2007 shall receive funding for the highest number of coordinators funded in a single fiscal year during that period, provided they meet applicable size and performance standards.

''(iv) INITIAL YEAR.—For the first year in which a public housing agency exercises its right to develop an family self-sufficiency program for its residents, it shall be entitled to funding to cover the costs of up to one family self-sufficiency coordinator, based on the size specified in its action plan for such program.

''(v) STATE AND REGIONAL AGENCIES.—For purposes of calculating the family self-sufficiency portion of the administrative fee under this subparagraph, each administratively distinct part of a State or regional public housing agency shall be treated as a separate agency.

''(vi) DETERMINATION OF NUMBER OF COORDINATORS.—In determining whether a public housing agency meets a specific threshold for funding pursuant to this paragraph, the number of participants being served by the agency in its family self-sufficiency program shall be considered to be the average number of families enrolled in such agency's program during the course of the most recent fiscal year for which the Department of Housing and Urban Development has data.

''(C) PRORATION.—If insufficient funds are available in any fiscal year to fund all of the coordinators authorized under this section, the first priority shall be given to funding one coordinator at each agency with an existing family self-sufficiency program. The remaining funds shall be prorated based on the number of remaining coordinators to which each agency is entitled under this subparagraph.

''(D) RECAPTURE.—Any fees allocated under this subparagraph by the Secretary in a fiscal year that have not been spent by the end of the subsequent fiscal year shall be recaptured by the Secretary and shall be available for providing additional fees pursuant to subparagraph (B)(ii).

''(E) PERFORMANCE STANDARDS.—Within six months after the date of the enactment of this paragraph, the Secretary shall publish a proposed rule specifying the performance standards applicable to funding under clauses (ii) and (iii) of subparagraph (B). Such standards shall include requirements applicable to the leveraging of in-kind services and other resources to support the goals of the family self-sufficiency program.

''(F) DATA COLLECTION.—Public housing agencies receiving funding under this paragraph shall collect and report to the Secretary, in such manner as the Secretary shall require, information on the performance of their family self-sufficiency programs.

''(G) EVALUATION.—The Secretary shall conduct a formal and scientific evaluation of the effectiveness of well-run family self-sufficiency programs, using random assignment of participants to the extent practicable. Not later than the expiration of the 4-year period beginning upon the enactment of this paragraph, the Secretary shall submit an interim evaluation report to the Congress. Not later than the expiration of the 8-year period beginning upon such enactment, the Secretary shall submit a final evaluation report to the Congress. There is authorized to be appropriated $10,000,000 to carry out the evaluation under this subparagraph.

''(H) INCENTIVES FOR INNOVATION AND HIGH PERFORMANCE.—The Secretary may reserve up to 10 percent of the amounts made available for administrative fees under this paragraph to provide support to or reward family self-sufficiency programs that are particularly innovative or highly successful in achieving the goals of the program.''.

(c) REPEAL.—Section 202 of the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development, and Independent Agencies Appropriations Act, 1997 (42 U.S.C. 1437f note; Public Law 104–204; 110 Stat. 2893) is hereby repealed.

SEC. 8. HOMEOWNERSHIP.

(a) SECTION 8 HOMEOWNERSHIP DOWNPAYMENT PROGRAM.—Section 8(y)(7) of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437f(y)(7)) is amended by striking subparagraphs (A) and (B) and inserting the following new subparagraphs:

''(A) IN GENERAL.—Subject to the provisions of this paragraph, in the case of a family on whose behalf rental assistance under section 8(o) has been provided for a period of not less than 12 months prior to the date of receipt of downpayment assistance under this paragraph, a public housing agency may, in lieu of providing monthly assistance payments under this subsection on behalf of a family eligible for such assistance and at the discretion of the agency, provide a downpayment assistance grant in accordance with subparagraph (B).

''(B) GRANT REQUIREMENTS.—A downpayment assistance grant under this paragraph—

''(i) shall be used by the family only as a contribution toward the downpayment and reasonable and customary closing costs required in connection with the purchase of a home;

''(ii) shall be in the form of a single one-time grant; and

''(iii) may not exceed $10,000.

''(C) NO EFFECT ON OBTAINING OUTSIDE SOURCES FOR DOWNPAYMENT ASSISTANCE.—This Act may not be construed to prohibit a public housing agency from providing downpayment assistance to families from sources other than a grant provided under this Act, or as determined by the public housing agency.''.

(b) USE OF VOUCHERS FOR MANUFACTURED HOUSING.—Section 8(o)(12) of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437f(o)(12) is amended—

(1) in subparagraph (A), by striking the period at the end of the first sentence and all that follows through ''of'' in the second sentence and inserting ''and rents''; and

(2) in subparagraph (B)—

(A) in clause (i), by striking ''the rent'' and all that follows and inserting the following: ''rent shall mean the sum of the monthly payments made by a family assisted under this paragraph to amortize the cost of purchasing the manufactured home, including any required insurance and property taxes, the monthly amount allowed for tenant-paid utilities, and the monthly rent charged for the real property on which the manufactured home is located, including monthly management and maintenance charges.'';

(B) by striking clause (ii); and

(C) in clause (iii)—

(i) by inserting after the period at the end the following: ''If the amount of the monthly assistance payment for a family exceeds the monthly rent charged for the real property on which the manufactured home is located, including monthly management and maintenance charges, a public housing agency may pay the remainder to the family, lender or utility company, or may choose to make a single payment to the family for the entire monthly assistance amount.''; and

(ii) by redesignating such clause as clause (ii).

SEC. 9. PHA REPORTING OF RENT PAYMENTS TO CREDIT REPORTING AGENCIES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 3 of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437a), as amended by the preceding provisions of this Act, is further amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

''(e) PHA REPORTING OF RENT PAYMENTS TO CREDIT REPORTING AGENCIES.—

''(1) AUTHORITY.—To the extent that a family receiving tenant-based housing choice vouchers under section 8 by a public housing agency agrees in writing to reporting under this subsection, the public housing agency may submit to consumer reporting agencies described in section 603(p) of the Fair Credit Reporting Act (15 U.S.C. 1681a) information regarding the past rent payment history of the family with respect to the dwelling unit for which such assistance is provided.

''(2) FORMAT.—The Secretary, after consultation with consumer reporting agencies referred in paragraph (1), shall establish a system and format to be used by public housing agencies for reporting of information under such paragraph that provides such information in a format and manner that is similar to other credit information submitted to such consumer reporting agencies and is usable by such agencies.''.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by subsection (a) shall take effect on the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 10. PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENTS.

Section 8(o) of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437f(o)) is amended by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

''(21) PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENTS.—

''(A) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Secretary shall, by regulation, establish standards and procedures for assessing the performance of public housing agencies in carrying out the programs for tenant-based rental assistance under this subsection and for homeownership assistance under subsection (y).

''(B) CONTENTS.—The standards and procedures under this paragraph shall provide for assessment of the performance of public housing agencies in the following areas:

''(i) Quality of dwelling units obtained using such assistance.

''(ii) Extent of utilization of assistance amounts provided to the agency and of authorized vouchers.

''(iii) Timeliness and accuracy of reporting by the agency to the Secretary.

''(iv) Effectiveness in carrying out policies to achieve deconcentration of poverty.

''(v) Reasonableness of rent burdens, consistent with public housing agency responsibilities under section 8(o)(1)(E)(iii).

''(vi) Accurate rent calculations and subsidy payments.

''(vii) Effectiveness in carrying out family self-sufficiency activities.

''(viii) Timeliness of actions related to landlord participation.

''(ix) Such other areas as the Secretary considers appropriate.

''(C) PERIODIC ASSESSMENT.—Using the standards and procedures established under this paragraph, the Secretary shall conduct an assessment of the performance of each public housing agency carrying out a program referred to in subparagraph (A) and shall submit a report to the Congress regarding the results of each such assessment.''.

SEC. 11. PHA PROJECT-BASED ASSISTANCE.

Section 8(o)(13) of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437f(o)(13)) is amended—

(1) by striking subparagraph (B) and inserting the following new subparagraph:

''(B) PERCENTAGE LIMITATION.—

''(i) IN GENERAL.—Subject to clause (ii), not more than 25 percent of the funding available for tenant-based assistance under this section that is administered by the agency may be attached to structures pursuant to this paragraph.

''(ii) EXCEPTION.—An agency may attach up to an additional 5 percent of the funding available for tenant-based assistance under this section to structures pursuant to this paragraph for dwelling units that house individuals and families that meet the definition of homeless under section 103 of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11302).'';

(2) by striking subparagraph (D) and inserting the following new subparagraph:

''(D) INCOME MIXING REQUIREMENT.—

''(i) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in clause (ii), not more than the greater of 25 dwelling units or 25 percent of the dwelling units in any project may be assisted under a housing assistance payment contract for project-based assistance pursuant to this paragraph. For purposes of this subparagraph, the term 'project' means a single building, multiple contiguous buildings, or multiple buildings on contiguous parcels of land.

''(ii) EXCEPTIONS.—

''(I) CERTAIN HOUSING.—The limitation under clause (i) shall not apply in the case of assistance under a contract for housing consisting of single family properties, or for dwelling units that are specifically made available for households comprised of elderly families, disabled families, and families receiving supportive services. For purposes of the preceding sentence, the term 'single family properties' means buildings with no more than four dwelling units.

''(II) CERTAIN AREAS.—With respect to areas in which fewer than 75 percent of families issued vouchers become participants in the program, the public housing agency has established the payment standard at 110 percent of the fair market rent for all census tracts in the area for the previous six months, and the public housing agency grants an automatic extension of 90 days (or longer) to families with vouchers who are attempting to find housing, clause (i) shall be applied by substituting '50 percent' for '25 percent'.'';

(3) in the first sentence of subparagraph (F), by striking ''10 years'' and inserting ''15 years'';

(4) in subparagraph (G)—

(A) by inserting after the period at the end of the first sentence the following: ''Such contract may, at the election of the public housing agency and the owner of the structure, specify that such contract shall be extended for renewal terms of up to 15 years each, if the agency makes the determination required by this subparagraph and the owner is in compliance with the terms of the contract.''; and

(B) by adding at the end the following: ''A public housing agency may agree to enter into such a contract at the time it enters into the initial agreement for a housing assistance payment contract or at any time thereafter that is before the expiration of the housing assistance payment contract.'';

(5) in subparagraph (H), by inserting before the period at the end of the first sentence the following: '', except that in the case of a contract unit that has been allocated low-income housing tax credits and for which the rent limitation pursuant to such section 42 is less than the amount that would otherwise be permitted under this subparagraph, the rent for such unit may, in the sole discretion of a public housing agency, be established at the higher section 8 rent, subject only to paragraph (10)(A)'';

(6) in subparagraph (I)(i), by inserting before the semicolon the following: '', except that the contract may provide that the maximum rent permitted for a dwelling unit shall not be less than the initial rent for the dwelling unit under the initial housing assistance payments contract covering the unit'';

(7) in subparagraph (J)—

(A) by striking the fifth and sixth sentences and inserting the following: ''A public housing agency may establish and utilize procedures for maintaining site-based waiting lists under which applicants may apply directly at, or otherwise designate to the public housing agency, the project or projects in which they seek to reside, except that all applicants on the waiting list of an agency for assistance under this subsection shall be permitted to place their names on such separate list. All such procedures shall comply with title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Fair Housing Act, and other applicable civil rights laws. The owner or manager of a structure assisted under this paragraph shall not admit any family to a dwelling unit assisted under a contract pursuant to this paragraph other than a family referred by the public housing agency from its waiting list, or a family on a site-based waiting list that complies with the requirements of this subparagraph. A public housing agency shall fully disclose to each applicant each option in the selection of a project in which to reside that is available to the applicant.''; and

(B) by inserting after the third sentence the following new sentence: ''Any family who resides in a dwelling unit proposed to be assisted under this paragraph, or in a unit to be replaced by a proposed unit to be assisted under this paragraph shall be given an absolute preference for selection for placement in the proposed unit, if the family is otherwise eligible for assistance under this subsection.''; and

(8) by adding at the end the following new subparagraphs:

''(L) USE IN COOPERATIVE HOUSING AND ELEVATOR BUILDINGS.—A public housing agency may enter into a housing assistance payments contract under this paragraph with respect to—

''(i) dwelling units in cooperative housing;

''(ii) notwithstanding subsection (c), dwelling units in a high-rise elevator project, including such a project that is occupied by families with children, without review and approval of the contract by the Secretary.

''(M) REVIEWS.—

''(i) SUBSIDY LAYERING.—A subsidy layering review in accordance with section 102(d) of the Department of Housing and Urban Development Reform Act of 1989 (42 U.S.C. 3545(d)) shall not be required for assistance under this subparagraph in the case of a housing assistance payments contract for an existing structure, or if a subsidy layering review has been conducted by the applicable State or local agency.

''(ii) ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW.—A public housing agency shall not be required to undertake any environmental review before entering into a housing assistance payments contract under this paragraph for an existing structure, except to the extent such a review is otherwise required by law or regulation.

''(N) LEASES AND TENANCY.—Assistance provided under this paragraph shall be subject to the provisions of paragraph (7), except that subparagraph (A) of such paragraph shall not apply.''.

SEC. 12. RENT BURDENS.

(a) REVIEWS.—Section 8(o)(1) of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437f(o)(1)) is amended by striking subparagraph (E) and inserting the following new subparagraph:

''(E) REVIEWS.—

''(i) RENT BURDENS.—The Secretary shall monitor rent burdens and submit a report to the Congress annually on the percentage of families assisted under this subsection, occupying dwelling units of any size, that pay more than 30 percent of their adjusted incomes for rent and such percentage that pay more than 40 percent of their adjusted incomes for rent. Using information regularly reported by public housing agencies, the Secretary shall provide public housing agencies, on an annual basis, a report with the information described in the first sentence of this clause, and may require a public housing agency to modify a payment standard that results in a significant percentage of families assisted under this subsection, occupying dwelling units of any size, paying more than 30 percent of their adjusted incomes for rent.

''(ii) CONCENTRATION OF POVERTY.—The Secretary shall submit a report to the Congress annually on the degree to which families assisted under this subsection in each metropolitan area are clustered in lower rent, higher poverty areas and how, and the extent to which, greater geographic distribution of such assisted families could be achieved, including by increasing payment standards for particular communities within such metropolitan areas.

''(iii) PUBLIC HOUSING AGENCY RESPONSIBILITIES.—Each public housing agency shall make publicly available the information on rent burdens provided by the Secretary pursuant to clause (i), and, for agencies located in metropolitan areas, the information on concentration provided by the Secretary pursuant to clause (ii). If the percentage of families paying more than 30 percent or 40 percent of income exceeds the national average for either of such categories, as reported pursuant to clause (i), the public housing agency shall adjust the payment standard to eliminate excessive rent burdens within a reasonable time period or explain its reasons for not making such adjustment. The Secretary may not deny the request of a public housing agency to set a payment standard up to 120 percent of the fair market rent to remedy rent burdens in excess of the national average or undue concentration of families assisted under this subsection in lower rent, higher poverty sections of a metropolitan area except on the basis that an agency has not demonstrated that its request meets these criteria. If a request of a public housing agency has not been denied or approved with 45 days after the request is made, the request shall be considered to have been approved.''.

(b) PUBLIC HOUSING AGENCY PLAN.—Section 5A(d)(4) of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437c–1(d)(4)) is amended by inserting before the period at the end the following: '', including the report with respect to the agency furnished by the Secretary pursuant to section 8(o)(1)(E) concerning rent burdens and, if applicable, geographic concentration of voucher holders, any changes in rent or other policies the public housing agency is making to address excessive rent burdens or concentration, and if the public housing agency is not adjusting its payment standard, its reasons for not doing so''.

(c) RENT BURDENS FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES.—Subparagraph (D) of section 8(o)(1) is amended by inserting before the period at the end the following: '', except that a public housing agency may establish a payment standard of not more than 120 percent of the fair market rent where necessary as a reasonable accommodation for a person with a disability, without approval of the Secretary. A public housing agency may seek approval of the Secretary to use a payment standard greater than 120 percent of the fair market rent as a reasonable accommodation for a person with a disability''.

SEC. 13. ESTABLISHMENT OF FAIR MARKET RENT.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Paragraph (1) of section 8(c) of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437f(c)(1)) is amended—

(1) by inserting ''(A)'' after the paragraph designation;

(2) by striking the seventh, eighth, and ninth sentences; and

(3) by adding at the end the following:

''(B)(i) The Secretary shall endeavor to define market areas for purposes of this paragraph in a manner that results in fair market rentals that are adequate to cover typical rental costs of units suitable for occupancy by persons assisted under this section in as wide a range of communities as is feasible, including communities with low poverty rates.

''(ii) The Secretary at a minimum shall define a separate market area for each—

''(I) metropolitan city, as such term is defined in section 102(a) of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974 (42 U.S.C. 5302(a)), with more than 40,000 rental dwelling units; and

''(II) urban county or portion of an urban county, as such term is defined in such section 102(a), located outside the boundaries of any metropolitan city specified in subclause (I).

''(iii) The Secretary shall, at the request of one or more public housing agencies, establish a separate market area for part or all of the area under the jurisdiction of such agencies, if—

''(I) the requested market area contains at least 20,000 rental dwelling units;

''(II) the areas contained in the requested market area are geographically contiguous and share similar housing market characteristics;

''(III) adequate data are available to establish a reliable fair market rental for the requested market area, and for the remainder of the market area in which it is currently located; and

''(IV) establishing the requested market area would raise or lower the fair market rental by 10 percent or more at the time the requested market area is established.

For purposes of subclause (III), data for an area shall be considered adequate if they are sufficient to establish from time to time a reliable benchmark fair market rental based primarily on data from that area, whether or not those data need to be supplemented with data from a larger area for purposes of annual updates.

''(iv) The Secretary shall not reduce the fair market rental in a market area as a result of a change in the percentile of the distribution of market rents used to establish the fair market rental.''.

(b) PAYMENT STANDARD.—Subparagraph (B) of section 8(o)(1) of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437f(o)(1)(B)) is amended by inserting before the period at the end the following: '', except that no public housing agency shall be required as a result of a reduction in the fair market rental to reduce the payment standard applied to a family continuing to reside in a unit for which the family was receiving assistance under this section at the time the fair market rental was reduced''.

SEC. 14. SCREENING OF APPLICANTS.

Subparagraph (B) of section 8(o)(6) of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (1437f(o)(6)(B)) is amended by inserting after the period at the end of the second sentence the following: ''A public housing agency's elective screening shall be limited to criteria that are directly related to an applicant's ability to fulfill the obligations of an assisted lease and shall consider mitigating circumstances related to such applicant. Any applicant or participant determined to be ineligible for admission or continued participation to the program shall be notified of the basis for such determination and provided, within a reasonable time after the determination, an opportunity for an informal hearing on such determination at which mitigating circumstances, including remedial conduct subsequent to the notice, shall be considered.''.

SEC. 15. ENHANCED VOUCHERS.

Subparagraph (B) of section 8(t)(1) of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437f(t)(1)(B)) is amended by inserting after ''eligibility event for the project,'' the following: ''regardless of unit and family size standards normally used by the administering agency (except that tenants may be required to move to units of appropriate size if available on the premises),''.

SEC. 16. HOUSING INNOVATION PROGRAM.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT OF PROGRAM.—Title I of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437 et seq.) is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

''SEC. 36. HOUSING INNOVATION PROGRAM.

''(a) PURPOSE.—The purpose of the program under this section is to provide public housing agencies and the Secretary the flexibility to design and evaluate innovative approaches to providing housing assistance that—

''(1) increase housing opportunities for low-income families, including preventing homelessness, rehabilitate or replace housing at risk of physical deterioration or obsolescence, and develop additional affordable housing;

''(2) leverage other Federal, State, and local funding sources, including the low-income housing tax credit program, to expand and preserve affordable housing opportunities, including public housing;

''(3) provide financial incentives and other support mechanisms to families to obtain employment and increase earned income;

''(4) test alternative rent-setting policies to determine whether rent determinations can be simplified and administrative cost savings can be realized while protecting extremely low- and very low-income families from increased rent burdens;

''(5) are subject to rigorous evaluation to test the effectiveness of such innovative approaches; and

''(6) are developed with the support of the local community and with the substantial participation of affected residents.

''(b) PROGRAM AUTHORITY.—

''(1) SCOPE.—The Secretary shall carry out a housing innovation program under this section under which the Secretary may designate not more than 60 public housing agencies to participate, at any one time, in the housing innovation program, in accordance with subsections (c) and (d), except that, in addition to such 60 agencies, the Secretary may designate an additional 20 agencies to participate in the program under the terms of subsection (h).

''(2) DURATION.—The Secretary may carry out the housing innovation program under this section only during the 10-year period beginning on the date of the enactment of the Section 8 Voucher Reform Act of 2007.

''(c) PARTICIPATION OF EXISTING MTW AGENCIES.—

''(1) EXISTING MTW AGENCIES.—Subject to the requirements of paragraph (2), all existing MTW agencies shall be designated to participate in the program.

''(2) CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION.—The Secretary shall approve and transfer into the housing innovation program under this section each existing MTW agency that the Secretary determines is not in default under such agreement and which the Secretary also determines is meeting the goals and objectives of its moving to work plan. Each such agency shall, within two years after the date of the enactment of the Section 8 Voucher Reform Act of 2007, make changes to its policies that were implemented before such date of enactment in order to comply with the requirements of this section.

''(d) ADDITIONAL AGENCIES.—

''(1) PROPOSALS; SELECTION PROCESS.—In addition to agencies participating in the program pursuant to subsection (c), the Secretary shall,

within 18 months after such date of enactment, select public housing agencies to participate in the program pursuant to a competitive process that meets the following requirements:

''(A) Any public housing agency may be selected to participate in the program, except that not more than 5 agencies that are near-troubled under the public housing assessment system and/or section 8 management assessment program may be selected, and except that any agency for which the Secretary has hired an alternative management entity for such agency or has taken possession of all or any part of such agency's public housing program shall not be eligible for participation. Any near-troubled public housing agency participating in the program shall remain subject to the requirements of this Act governing tenant rent contributions, eligibility, and continued participation, and may not adopt policies described in subsection (e)(4) (relating to rents and requirements for continued occupation and participation).

''(B) The process provides, to the extent possible based on eligible agencies submitting applications and taking into account existing MTW agencies participating pursuant to subsection (c), for representation among agencies selected of agencies having various characteristics, including both large and small agencies, agencies serving urban, suburban, and rural areas, and agencies in various geographical regions throughout the United States, and which may include the selection of agencies that only administer the voucher program under section 8(o).

''(C) Any agency submitting a proposal under this paragraph shall have provided notice to residents and the local community, not later than 30 days before the first of the two public meetings required under subparagraph (D).

''(D) The agency submitting a proposal shall hold two public meetings to receive comments on the agency's proposed application, on the implications of changes under the proposal, and the possible impact on residents.

''(E) The process includes criteria for selection, as follows:

''(i) The extent to which the proposal generally identifies existing rules and regulations that impede achievement of the goals and objectives of the proposal and an explanation of why participation in the program is necessary to achieve such goals and objectives.

''(ii) The extent of commitment and funding for carrying out the proposal by local government agencies and nonprofit organizations, including the provision of additional funding and other services, and the extent of support for the proposal by residents, resident advisory boards, and members of the local community.

''(iii) The extent to which the agency has a successful history of implementing strategies similar to those set forth in the agency's proposal.

''(iv) Whether the proposal pursues a priority strategy as specified in paragraph (2). In the case of any proposal utilizing a such a priority strategy, the proposal shall be evaluated based upon—

''(I) the extent to which the proposal is likely to achieve the objectives of developing additional housing dwelling units affordable to extremely low-, very low-, and low-income families, and preserving, rehabilitating, or modernizing existing public housing dwelling units; or

''(II) the extent to which the proposal is likely to achieve the purposes of moving families toward economic self-sufficiency and increasing employment rates and wages of families without imposing a significant rent burden on the lowest income families, as well as such of the additional purposes as may be identified in the proposal, which may include expanding housing choices utilizing coordinators for the family self-sufficiency program under section 23, making more effective use of program funds, and improving program management.

''(v) Such other factors as the Secretary may provide, in consultation with participating agencies, program stakeholders, and any entity conducting evaluations pursuant to subsection (f).

''(2) PRIORITY STRATEGIES.—For purposes of paragraph (1)(E)(iv), the following are priority strategies:

''(A) DEVELOPMENT, REHABILITATION, AND FINANCING.—A strategy of development of additional affordable housing dwelling units and/or a strategy for preservation and physical rehabilitation and modernization of existing public housing dwelling units. Such strategies may include innovative financing proposals, leveraging of non-public housing funds (including the low-income housing tax credit program), and combining of funds for assistance under sections 8 and 9. Each such proposal shall include detailed information about the strategies expected to be employed, an explanation of why participation in the program is necessary to employ such strategies, and numerical goals regarding the number of dwelling units to be developed, preserved, or rehabilitated.

''(B) RENT REFORMS.—A strategy to implement rent reforms, which shall be designed to help families increase their earned income through rent and other work incentives, and may also test the effectiveness of achieving administrative cost savings without increased rent burdens for extremely low- and very low-income families.

''(3) CONTRACT AMENDMENT.—After selecting agencies under this subsection, the Secretary shall promptly amend the applicable annual contributions contracts of such agencies to provide that—

''(A) subject to subparagraph (B), such agencies may implement any policies and activities that are not inconsistent with this section without specifying such policies and activities in such amendment and without negotiating or entering into any other agreements with the Secretary specifying such policies and activities; and

''(B) the activities to be implemented by an agency under the program in a given year shall be described in and subject to the requirements of the annual plan under subsection (e)(8). Upon the enactment of this section, any agency which has participated in the Moving to Work demonstration may, at its option, be subject to the provisions of this paragraph in lieu of any other agreement required by the Secretary for participation in the program.

''(4) MAINTAINING PARTICIPATION RATE.—If, at any time after the initial selection period under paragraph (1), the number of public housing agencies participating in the program under this section is fewer than 40, the Secretary shall promptly solicit applications from and select public housing agencies to participate in the program under the terms and conditions for application and selection provided in this section to increase the number of agencies participating in the program to 40.

''(e) PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS.—

''(1) PROGRAM FUNDS.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—To carry out a housing innovation program under this section, the participating agency may use amounts provided to the agency from the Operating Fund under section 9(e), amounts provided to the agency from the Capital Fund under section 9(d), and amounts provided to the agency for voucher assistance under section 8(o). Such program funds may be used for any activities that are authorized by sections 8(o) or 9, or for other activities that are not inconsistent with this section, which shall include, without limitation—

''(i) providing capital and operating assistance, and financing for housing previously developed or operated pursuant to a contract between the Secretary and such agency;

''(ii) the acquisition, new construction, rehabilitation, financing, and provision of capital or operating assistance for low-income housing (including housing other than public housing) and related facilities, which may be for terms exceeding the term of the program under this section in order to secure other financing for such housing;

''(iii) costs of site acquisition and improvement, providing utility services, demolition, planning, and administration of activities under this paragraph;

''(iv) housing counseling for low-income families in connection with rental or homeownership assistance provided under the program;

''(v) safety, security, law enforcement, and anticrime activities appropriate to protect and support families assisted under the program;

''(vi) tenant-based rental assistance, which may include the project-basing of such assistance; and

''(vii) appropriate and reasonable financial assistance that is required to preserve low-income housing otherwise assisted under programs administered by the Secretary or under State or local low-income housing programs.

''(B) COMBINING FUNDS.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, a participating agency may combine and use program funds for any activities authorized under this section, except that a participating agency may use funds provided for assistance under section 8(o) for activities other than those authorized under section 8(o) only if (i) in the calendar year prior to its participation in the program, the agency utilized not less than 95 percent of such funds allocated for that calendar year for such authorized activities or 95 percent of its authorized vouchers, including vouchers ported in to the agency and vouchers ported out; or (ii) after approval to participate in the program, the agency achieves such utilization for a 12-month period. This subparagraph shall not apply to participating agencies approved by the Secretary to combine funds from sections 8 and 9 of the Act prior to enactment of this section.

''(2) USE OF PROGRAM FUNDS.—In carrying out the housing innovation program under this section, each participating agency shall continue to assist—

''(A) not less than substantially the same number of eligible low-income families under the program as it assisted in the base year for the agency; and

''(B) a comparable mix of families by family size, subject to adjustment to reflect changes in the agency's waiting list, except that the Secretary may approve exceptions to such requirements for up to 3 years based on modernization or redevelopment activities proposed in an annual plan submitted and approved in accordance with paragraph (8).

Determinations with respect to the number of families served shall be adjusted based on any allocation of additional vouchers under section 8(o) and to reflect any change in the percentage of program funds that a participating agency receives compared to the base year.

''(3) RETAINED PROVISIONS.—Notwithstanding any other provision of this section, families receiving assistance under this section shall retain the same rights of judicial review of agency action as they would otherwise have had if the agency were not participating in the program, and each participating agency shall comply with the following provisions of this Act:

''(A) Subsections (a)(2)(A) and (b)(1) of section 16 (relating to targeting for new admissions in the public housing and voucher programs).

''(B) Section 2(b) (relating to tenant representatives on the public housing agency board of directors).

''(C) Section 3(b)(2) (relating to definitions for the terms 'low-income families' and 'very low-income families').

''(D) Section 5(A)(e) (relating to the formation of and consultation with a resident advisory board).

''(E) Sections 6(f)(1) and 8(o)(8)(B) (relating to compliance of units assisted with housing quality standards or other codes).

''(F) Sections 6(c)(3), 6(c)(4)(i), and 8(o)(6)(B) (relating to rights of public housing applicants

and existing procedural rights for applicants under section 8(o)).

''(G) Section 6(k) (relating to grievance procedures for public housing tenants) and comparable procedural rights for families assisted under section 8(o).

''(H) Section 6(l) (relating to public housing lease requirements), except that for units assisted both with program funds and low-income housing tax credits, the initial lease term may be less than 12 months if required to conform lease terms with such tax credit requirements.

''(I) Section 7 (relating to designation of housing for elderly and disabled households), except that a participating agency may make such designations(at initial designation or upon renewal) for a term of up to 5 years if the agency includes in its annual plan under paragraph (8) an analysis of the impact of such designations on affected households and such designation is subject to the program evaluation. Any participating agency with a designated housing plan that was approved under the moving to work demonstration may continue to operate under the terms of such plan for a term of 5 years (with an option to renew on the same terms for an additional 5 years) if it includes in its annual plan an analysis of the impact of such designations on affected households and is subject to evaluation under subsection (f).

''(J) Subparagraphs (C) through (E) of section 8(o)(7) (relating to lease requirements and eviction protections for families assisted with tenant-based assistance).

''(K) Subject to paragraph (1)(B) of this subsection, section 8(o)(13)(B) (relating to a percentage limitation on project-based assistance), except that for purposes of this subparagraph such section shall be applied by substituting '50 percent' for '20 percent'.

''(L) Section 8(o)(13)(E) (relating to resident choice for tenants of units with project-based vouchers), except with respect to—

''(i) in the case of agencies participating in the moving to work demonstration, any housing assistance payment contract entered into within 2 years after the enactment of this section;

''(ii) project-based vouchers that replace public housing units;

''(iii) not more than 10 percent of the vouchers available to the participating agency upon entering the housing innovation program under this section; and

''(iv) any project-based voucher program that is subject to evaluation under subsection (f).

''(M) Section 8(r) (relating to portability of voucher assistance), except that a participating agency may receive funding for portability obligations under section 8(dd) in the same manner as other public housing agencies.

''(N) Subsections (a) and (b) of section 12 (relating to payment of prevailing wages).

''(O) Section 18 (relating to demolition and disposition of public housing).

''(4) RENTS AND REQUIREMENTS FOR CONTINUED OCCUPANCY OR PARTICIPATION.—

''(A) BEFORE POLICY CHANGE.—Before adopting any policy pursuant to participation in the housing innovation program under this section that would make a material change to the requirements of this Act regarding tenant rents or contributions, or conditions of continued occupancy or participation, a participating agency shall complete each of the following actions:

''(i) The agency shall conduct an impact analysis of the proposed policy on families the agency is assisting under the program under this section and on applicants on the waiting list, including analysis of the incidence and severity of rent burdens greater than 30 percent of adjusted income on households of various sizes and types and in various income tiers, that would result, if any, without application of the hardship provisions. The analysis with respect to applicants on the waiting list may be limited to demographic data provided by the applicable consolidated plan, information provided by the Secretary, and other generally available information. The proposed policy, including provisions for addressing hardship cases and transition provisions that mitigate the impact of any rent increases or changes in the conditions of continued occupancy or participation, and data from this analysis shall be made available for public inspection for at least 60 days in advance of the public meeting described in clause (ii).

''(ii) The agency shall hold a public meeting regarding the proposed change, including the hardship provisions, which may be combined with a public meeting on the draft annual plan under paragraph (8) or the annual report under paragraph (9).

''(iii) The board of directors or other similar governing body of the agency shall approve the change in public session.

''(iv) The agency shall obtain approval from the Secretary of the annual plan or plan amendment. The Secretary may approve a plan or amendment containing a material change to the requirements of this Act regarding tenant rents or contributions, or conditions of continued occupancy or participation, only if the agency agrees that such policy may be included as part of the national evaluation.

''(B) AFTER POLICY CHANGE.—After adopting a policy described in subparagraph (A), a program agency shall complete each of the following actions:

''(i) The agency shall provide adequate notice to residents, which shall include a description of the changes in the public housing lease or participation agreement that may be required and of the hardship or transition protections offered.

''(ii) In the case of any additional requirements for continued occupancy or participation, the agency shall execute a lease addendum or participation agreement specifying the requirements applicable to both the resident and the agency. A resident may bring a civil action to enforce commitments of the agency made through the lease addendum or participation agreement.

''(iii) The agency shall reassess rent, subsidy level, and policies on program participation no less often than every two years, which shall include preparing a revised impact analysis, and make available to the public the results of such reassessment and impact analysis. The requirement under this clause may be met by sufficiently detailed interim reports, if any, by the national evaluating entity.

''(iv) The agency shall include in the annual report under paragraph (8) information sufficient to describe any hardship requests, including the number and types of requests made, granted, and denied, the use of transition rules, and adverse impacts resulting from changes in rent or continued occupancy policies, including actions taken by the agency to mitigate such impacts and impacts on families no longer assisted under the program.

''(C) APPLICABILITY TO EXISTING MTW AGENCIES.—An existing MTW agency that, before the date of the enactment of this section, implemented material changes to the requirements of this Act regarding tenant rents or contributions, or conditions of continued occupancy or participation, as part of the moving to work demonstration shall not be subject to subparagraph (A) with regard to such previously implemented changes, but shall comply with the requirements of subparagraph (B)(ii) and provide the evaluation and impact analysis required by subparagraph (B)(iii) by the end of the second agency fiscal year ending after such date of enactment.

''(5) PROHIBITION AGAINST DECREASE IN PROGRAM FUNDS.—The amount of program funds a participating agency receives shall not be diminished by its participation in the housing innovation program under this section.

''(6) SUBMISSION OF INFORMATION.—As part of the annual report required under subsection (g)(2), each participating agency shall submit information annually to the Secretary regarding families assisted under the program of the agency and comply with any other data submissions required by the Secretary for purposes of evaluation of the program under this section.

''(7) PUBLIC AND RESIDENT PARTICIPATION.—Each participating agency shall provide opportunities for resident and public participation in the annual plan under paragraph (8), as follows:

''(A) NOTICE TO RESIDENTS.—

''(i) NOTICE.—Each year, the agency shall provide notice to the low-income families it serves under the programs authorized by this section as to the impact of proposed policy changes and program initiatives and of the schedule of resident advisory board and public meetings for the annual plan.

''(ii) MEETING.—The agency shall hold at least one meeting with the resident advisory board (including representatives of recipients of assistance under section 8) to review the annual plan for each year.

''(B) PUBLIC MEETING.—With respect to each annual plan, the agency shall hold at least one annual public meeting to obtain comments on the plan, which may be combined with a meeting to review the annual report. In the case of any agency that administers, in the aggregate, more than 15,000 public housing units and vouchers, the agency shall hold additional meetings in locations that promote attendance by residents and other stakeholders.

''(C) PUBLIC AVAILABILITY.—Before adoption of any annual plan, and not less than 30 days before the public meeting required under subparagraph (A)(ii) with respect to the plan, the agency shall make the proposed annual plan available for public inspection. The annual plan shall be made available for public inspection not less than 30 days before approval by the board of directors (or other similar governing body) of the agency and shall remain publicly available.

''(D) BOARD APPROVAL.—Before submitting an annual plan or annual report to the Secretary, the plan or report, as applicable, shall be approved in a public meeting by the board of directors or other governing body of the agency.

''(8) ANNUAL PLAN.—

''(A) REQUIREMENT.—For each year that a participating agency participates in the housing innovation program under this section, the agency shall submit to the Secretary, in lieu of all other planning requirements, an annual plan under this paragraph.

''(B) CONTENTS.—Each annual plan shall include the following information:

''(i) A list and description of all program initiatives and generally applicable policy changes, including references to affected provisions of law or the implementing regulations affected.

''(ii) A description and comparison of changes under the housing innovation program of the agency from the plan for such program for the preceding year.

''(iii) A description of property redevelopment or portfolio repositioning strategies and proposed changes in policies or uses of funds required to implement such strategies.

''(iv) Documentation of public and resident participation sufficient to comply with the requirements under paragraphs (4) and (7), including a copy of any recommendations submitted in writing by the resident advisory board of the agency and members of the public, a summary of comments, and a description of the manner in which the recommendations were addressed.

''(v) Certifications by the agency that—

''(I) the annual plan will be carried out in conformity with title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Fair Housing Act, section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and the rules, standards, and policies in the approved plan;

''(II) the agency will affirmatively further fair housing; and

''(III) the agency has complied and will continue to comply with its obligations under the national evaluation.

''(vi) A description of the agency's local asset management strategy for public housing properties, which shall be in lieu of any other asset

management, project based management or accounting, or other system of allocating resources and costs to participating agency assets or cost centers that the Secretary may otherwise impose under this Act.

''(C) CHANGES.—If the agency proposes to make material changes in policies or initiatives in the plan during the year covered by the plan, the agency shall consult with the resident advisory board for the agency established pursuant to section 5A(e) and the public regarding such changes before their adoption.

''(D) APPROVAL PROCESS.—

''(i) TIMING.—The Secretary shall review and approve or disapprove each annual plan submitted to the Secretary within 45 days after such submission.

''(ii) STANDARDS FOR DISAPPROVAL.—The Secretary may disapprove a plan only if—

''(I) the Secretary reasonably determines, based on information contained in the annual plan or annual report, that the agency is not in compliance with the requirements of this section;

''(II) the annual plan or most recent annual report is not consistent with other reliable information available to the Secretary; or

''(III) the annual plan or annual report or the agency's activities under the program are not otherwise in accordance with applicable law.

''(iii) FAILURE TO DISAPPROVE.—If a submitted plan is not disapproved within 45 days after submission, the plan shall be considered to be approved for purposes of this section. The preceding sentence shall not preclude judicial review regarding such compliance pursuant to chapter 7 of title 5, United States Code, or an action regarding such compliance under section 1979 of the Revised Statutes of the United States (42 U.S.C. 1983).

''(f) EVALUATION OF PERFORMANCE.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than the expiration of the one-year period that begins upon selection under subsection (d) of at least half of the number of agencies able to participate in the program under this section, the Secretary shall conduct detailed evaluations of all public housing agencies participating in the program under this section—

''(A) to determine the level of success of each public housing agency in achieving the purposes of the program under subsection (a); and

''(B) to identify program models that can be replicated by other agencies to achieve such success.

''(2) REPORTS.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall submit three reports to the Congress, as provided in subparagraph (B), evaluating the programs of all public housing agencies participating in the program under this section and all agencies participating in the moving to work demonstration. Each such report shall include findings and recommendations for any appropriate legislative action.

''(B) TIMING.—The reports under this paragraph shall include—

''(i) an initial report, which shall be submitted before the expiration of the 3-year period beginning on the date of the enactment of the Section 8 Voucher Reform Act of 2007;

''(ii) an interim report, which shall be submitted before the expiration of the 5-year period beginning on such date of enactment; and

''(iii) a final report, which shall be submitted before the expiration of the 10-year period beginning on such date of enactment.

''(3) EVALUATING ENTITY.—The Secretary may contract out the responsibilities under this paragraphs (1) and (2) to an independent entity that is qualified to perform such responsibilities.

''(4) PERFORMANCE MEASURES.—The Secretary or the evaluating entity, as applicable, shall establish performance measures, which may include—

''(A) a baseline performance level against which program activities may be evaluated; and

''(B) performance measures for—

''(i) increasing housing opportunities for extremely low-, very low-, and low-income families, replacing or rehabilitating housing at risk of physical deterioration or obsolescence, and developing additional affordable housing;

''(ii) leveraging other Federal, State, and local funding sources, including the low-income housing tax credit program, to expand and preserve affordable housing opportunities, including public housing;

''(iii) moving families to self-sufficiency and increasing employment rates and wages of families without imposing a significant rent burden on the families having the lowest incomes;

''(iv) reducing administrative costs; and

''(v) any other performance measures that the Secretary or evaluating entity, as applicable, may establish.

''(g) RECORDKEEPING, REPORTS, AND AUDITS.—

''(1) RECORDKEEPING.—Each public housing agency participating in the program under this section shall keep such records as the Secretary may prescribe as reasonably necessary to disclose the amounts and the disposition of amounts under the program, to ensure compliance with the requirements of this section, and to measure performance.

''(2) REPORTS.—In lieu of all other reporting requirements, each such agency participating in the program shall submit to the Secretary an annual report in a form and at a time specified by the Secretary. Each annual report shall include the following information:

''(A) A description, including an annual consolidated financial report, of the sources and uses of funds of the agency under the program, which shall account separately for funds made available under section 8 and subsections (d) and (e) of section 9, and shall compare the agency's actions under the program with its annual plan for the year.

''(B) An annual audit that complies with the requirements of Circular A–133 of the Office of Management and Budget, including the OMB Compliance Supplement.

''(C) A description of each hardship exception requested and granted or denied, and of the use of any transition rules.

''(D) Documentation of public and resident participation sufficient to comply with the requirements under paragraph (7).

''(E) A comparison of income and the sizes and types of families assisted by the agency under the program compared to those assisted by the agency in the base year.

''(F) Every two years, an evaluation of rent policies, subsidy level policies, and policies on program participation.

''(G) A description of any ongoing local evaluations and the results of any local evaluations completed during the year.

''(3) ACCESS TO DOCUMENTS BY SECRETARY.—The Secretary shall have access for the purpose of audit and examination to any books, documents, papers, and records that are pertinent to assistance in connection with, and the requirements of, this section.

''(4) ACCESS TO DOCUMENTS BY THE COMPTROLLER GENERAL.—The Comptroller General of the United States, or any of the duly authorized representatives of the Comptroller General, shall have access for the purpose of audit and examination to any books, documents, papers, and records that are pertinent to assistance in connection with, and the requirements of, this section.

''(5) REPORTS REGARDING EVALUATIONS.—The Secretary shall require each public housing agency participating in the program under this section to submit to the Secretary, as part of the agency's annual report under paragraph (2), such information as the Secretary considers appropriate to permit the Secretary to evaluate (pursuant to subsection (f)) the performance and success of the agency in achieving the purposes of the demonstration.

''(h) ADDITIONAL PROGRAM AGENCIES.—In participating in the program under the terms of this subsection, the public housing agencies designated for such participation shall be subject to the requirements of this section, and the additional following requirements:

''(1) APPLICABILITY OF CERTAIN EXISTING PROVISIONS.—Such agencies shall be subject to the provisions of—

''(A) subsections (a) and (b) of section 3; and

''(B) section 8(o), except for paragraph (11) and except that such agencies shall not be required to comply with any provision of such section 8(o) that pursuant to subsection (e)(3) of this section does not apply to agencies that are subject to such section (e)(3).

''(2) NO TIME LIMITS.—Such agencies may not impose time limits on the term of housing assistance received by families under the program.

''(3) NO EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS.—Such agencies may not condition the receipt of housing assistance by families under the program on the employment status of one of more family members.

''(4) ONE-FOR-ONE REPLACEMENT.—

''(A) CONDITIONS ON DEMOLITION.—Such agencies may not demolish or dispose of any dwelling unit of public housing operated or administered by such agency (including any uninhabitable unit and any unit previously approved for demolition) except pursuant to a plan for replacement of such units in accordance with, and approved by the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development pursuant to, subparagraph (B).

''(B) PLAN REQUIREMENTS.—The Secretary may not approve a plan that provides for demolition or disposition of any dwelling unit of public housing referred to in subparagraph (A) unless—

''(i) such plan provides for outreach to public housing agency residents in accordance with paragraph (5);

''(ii) not later than 60 days before the date of the approval of such plan, such agency has convened and conducted a public hearing regarding the demolition or disposition proposed in the plan;

''(iii) such plan provides that for each such dwelling unit demolished or disposed of, such public housing agency will provide an additional dwelling unit through—

''(I) the acquisition or development of additional public housing dwelling units; or

''(II) the acquisition, development, or contracting (including through project-based assistance) of additional dwelling units that are subject to requirements regarding eligibility for occupancy, tenant contribution toward rent, and long-term affordability restrictions which are comparable to public housing units;

''(iv) such plan provides for a right, and implementation of such right, to occupancy of additional dwelling units provided in accordance with clause (iii), for households who, as of the time that dwelling units demolished or disposed of were vacated to provide for such demolition or disposition, were occupying such dwelling units;

''(v) such plan provides that the proposed demolition or disposition and relocation will be carried out in a manner that affirmatively furthers fair housing, as described in subsection (e) of section 808 of the Civil Rights Act of 1968; and

''(vi) to the extent that such plan provides for the provision of replacement or additional dwelling units, or redevelopment, in phases over time, such plan provides that the ratio of dwelling units described in subclauses (I) and (II) of clause (iii) that are provided in any such single phase to the total number of dwelling units provided in such phase is not less than the ratio of the aggregate number of such dwelling units provided under the plan to the total number of dwelling units provided under the plan.

''(C) INAPPLICABLE PROVISIONS.—Subparagraphs (B) and (D) of section 8(o)(13) of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437f(o)(13)) shall not apply with respect to vouchers used to comply with the requirements of subparagraph (B)(iii) of this paragraph.

''(D) MONITORING.—The Secretary of Housing and Urban Development shall provide for the appropriate field offices of the Department to monitor and supervise enforcement of this paragraph and plans approved under this paragraph and to consult, regarding such monitoring and enforcement, with resident councils of, and residents of public housing operated or administered by, the agency.

''(5) COMPREHENSIVE OUTREACH PLAN.—No program funds of such agencies may be use to demolish, dispose of, or eliminate any public housing dwelling units except in accordance with a comprehensive outreach plan for such activities, developed by the agency in conjunction with the residents of the public housing agency, as follows:

''(A) The plan shall be developed by the agency and a resident task force, which may include members of the Resident Council, but may not be limited to such members, and which shall represent all segments of the population of residents of the agency, including single parent-headed households, the elderly, young employed and unemployed adults, teenage youth, and disabled persons.

''(B) The votes and agreements regarding the plan shall involve not less than 25 and not more than 35 persons.

''(C) The plan shall provide for and describe outreach efforts to inform residents of the program under this subsection, including a door-to-door information program, monthly newsletters to each resident household, monthly meetings dedicated solely to every aspect of the proposed development, including redevelopment factors, which shall include the one-for-one replacement requirement under paragraph (5), resident rights to return, the requirements of the program under this subsection, new resident support and community services to be provided, opportunities for participation in architectural design, and employment opportunities for residents, which shall reserve at least 70 percent of the jobs in demolition activities and 50 percent of the jobs in construction activities related to the redevelopment project, including job training, apprenticeships, union membership assistance.

''(D) The plan shall provide for regularly scheduled monthly meeting updates and a system for filing complaints about any aspect of the redevelopment process.

''(i) DEFINITIONS.—For purposes of this section, the following definitions shall apply:

''(1) EXISTING MTW AGENCY.—The term 'existing MTW agency' means a public housing agency that as of the date of the enactment of the Section 8 Voucher Reform Act of 2007 has an existing agreement with the Secretary pursuant to the moving to work demonstration.

''(2) BASE YEAR.—The term 'base year' means, with respect to a participating agency, the agency fiscal year most recently completed prior to selection and approval for participation in the housing innovation program under this section.

''(3) MOVING TO WORK DEMONSTRATION.—The term 'moving to work demonstration' means the moving to work demonstration program under section 204 of the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development, and Independent Agencies Appropriations Act, 1996 (42 U.S.C. 1437f note).

''(4) PARTICIPATING AGENCIES.—The term 'participating agencies' means public housing agencies designated and approved for participation, and participating, in the housing innovation program under this section.

''(5) PROGRAM FUNDS.—The term 'program funds' means, with respect to a participating agency, any amounts that the agency is authorized, pursuant to subsection (e)(1), to use to carry out the housing innovation program under this section of the agency.

''(6) RESIDENTS.—The term 'residents' means, with respect to a public housing agency, tenants of public housing of the agency and participants in the voucher or other housing assistance programs of the agency funded under section 8(o), or tenants of other units owned by the agency and assisted under this section.

''(j) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS FOR RESIDENT TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.—There is authorized to be appropriated for each of fiscal years 2008 through 2012 $10,000,000, for providing capacity building and technical assistance to enhance the capabilities of low-income families assisted under the program under this section to participate in the process for establishment of annual plans under this section for participating agencies.

''(k) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS FOR EVALUATIONS.—There is authorized to be appropriated $15,000,000 to the Department of Housing and Urban Development for the purpose of conducting the evaluations required under subsection (f)(1).''.

(b) GAO REPORT.—Not later than 48 months after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General of the United States shall submit a report to the Congress on the extent to which the public housing agencies participating in the housing innovation program under section 36 of the United States Housing Act of 1937 are meeting the goals and purposes of such program, as identified in subsection (a) of such section 36.

SEC. 17. DEMONSTRATION PROGRAM WAIVER AUTHORITY.

(a) AUTHORITY TO ENTER INTO AGREEMENTS.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development may enter into such agreements as may be necessary with the Social Security Administration and the Secretary of Health and Human Services to allow for the participation, in any demonstration program described in subsection (c), by the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the use under such program of housing choice vouchers under section 8(o) of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437f(o)).

(b) WAIVER OF INCOME REQUIREMENTS.—The Secretary of Housing and Urban Development may, to extent necessary to allow rental assistance under section 8(o) of the United States Housing Act of 1937 to be provided on behalf of persons described in subsection (c) who participate in a demonstration program described in such subsection, and to allow such persons to be placed on a waiting list for such assistance, partially or wholly disregard increases in earned income for the purpose of rent calculations under section 3 for such persons.

(c) DEMONSTRATION PROGRAMS.—A demonstration program described in this subsection is a demonstration program of a State that provides for persons with significant disabilities to be employed and continue to receive benefits under programs of the Department of Health and Human Services and the Social Security Administration, including the program of supplemental security income benefits under title XVI of the Social Security Act, disability insurance benefits under title II of such Act, and the State program for medical assistance (Medicaid) under title XIX of such Act.

SEC. 18. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

There is authorized to be appropriated the amount necessary for each of fiscal years 2008 through 2012 to provide public housing agencies with incremental tenant-based assistance under section 8(o) of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437f(o)) sufficient to assist 20,000 incremental dwelling units in each such fiscal year.

SEC. 19. EFFECTIVE DATE.

Except as otherwise specifically provided in this Act, this Act and the amendments made by this Act, shall take effect on January 1, 2008.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. No amendment to the committee amendment is in order except the amendments printed in House Report 110–227. Each amendment may be offered only in the order printed in the report; by a member designated in the report; shall be considered read; shall be debatable for the time specified in the report, equally divided and controlled by the proponent and an opponent of the amendment; shall not be subject to amendment; and shall not be subject to a demand for division of the question.

AMENDMENT NO. 1 OFFERED BY MS. WATERS

The Acting CHAIRMAN. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 1 printed in House Report 110–227.

Ms. WATERS. Madam Chairman, I offer an amendment.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Amendment No. 1 offered by Ms. WATERS:

Page 4, line 16, strike ''biennial inspections'' and insert ''inspections not less often than biennially''.

Page 6, strike lines 5 and 6 and insert the following:

(3) by redesignating subparagraph (E) as subparagraph (G);

(4) by inserting after subparagraph (D) the following new subparagraphs:

''(E) INTERIM INSPECTIONS.—Upon notification to the public housing agency, by a family on whose behalf tenant-based rental assistance is provided under this subsection or by a government official, that the dwelling unit for which such assistance is provided does not comply with the housing quality standards under subparagraph (B), the agency shall inspect the dwelling unit—

''(i) in the case of any condition that is life-threatening, within 24 hours after receipt of such notice; and

''(ii) in the case of any condition that is not life-threatening, within 15 days after receipt of such notice.''.

Page 7, strike lines 1 through 3 and insert the following:

''(III) the failure to comply is not corrected—

''(aa) in the case of any such failure that is a result of life-threatening conditions, within 24 hours after receipt of such notice; and

''(bb) in the case of any such failure that is a result of non-life threatening conditions, within 30 days after receipt of such notice or such other reasonable period as the public housing agency may establish.''.

Page 7, line 4, strike ''AND RELEASE''.

Page 7, strike ''Subject'' in line 10 and all that follows through line 14, and insert the following: ''Upon completion of repairs by the public housing agency or the owner sufficient so that the dwelling unit complies with such housing quality standards, the agency shall recommence payments under the housing assistance payments contract to the owner of the dwelling unit.''.

Page 7, strike ''(or to'' in line 19 and all that follows through line 24, and insert the following: '', except that a contract to make repairs may not be entered into with the inspector for the dwelling unit referred to in clause (i)(I).''.

Page 8, line 6, after the period insert the following: ''During the period that assistance is withheld pursuant to this subparagraph, the tenant may terminate the tenancy by notifying the owner.''.

Page 8, strike ''before'' in line 12 and all that follows through line 16, and insert the following: ''within 60 days after the effective date of the determination of noncompliance

under clause (i), or such other reasonable period as the public housing agency may establish, and the agency does not use its authority under clause (iii), the agency shall terminate the housing assistance payments contract for the dwelling unit. The agency shall provide the family residing in such a dwelling unit a period of 90 days, beginning upon termination of the contract, to lease a new residence to assist with the tenant-based rental assistance made available under this section for the family. If the family is unable to lease such a new residence during such period, the public housing agency shall extend the period during which the family may lease a new residence to be assisted with such assistance or provide such family a preference for occupancy in a dwelling unit of public housing owned or operated by the agency that first becomes available for occupancy after the expiration of such period. The agency shall provide reasonable assistance to the family in finding a new residence, including use of two months of any assistance amounts withheld pursuant to clause (ii) for costs associated with relocation of the family to a new residence.''.

Page 8, after line 16, insert the following:

''(vi) LIMITATION OF LIABILITY OF PUBLIC HOUSING AGENCIES.—A public housing agency that uses its authority under clause (iii) shall not, if the agency accomplishes the work through a contractor that is licensed, bonded, and insured in amounts and with coverage as required by the Secretary, be liable for any injury or damages that may result to persons or to any property owned by the tenant or owner.

''(vii) TENANT-CAUSED DAMAGES.—If a public housing agency determines that any damage to a dwelling unit that results in a failure of the dwelling unit to comply with housing quality standards under subparagraph (B), other than any damage resulting from ordinary use, was caused by the tenant, any member of the tenant's household, or any guest or other person under the tenant's control, the agency may, in the discretion of the agency, waive the applicability of this subparagraph, except that this clause shall not exonerate a tenant from any liability otherwise existing under applicable law for damages to the premises caused by such tenant.''.

Page 8, line 17, strike ''(vi)'' and insert ''(viii)''.

Page 9, line 13, strike ''and''.

Page 9, after line 13, insert the following:

(B) in paragraph (1)—

(i) by striking ''paragraph (2)'' and inserting ''paragraphs (2) and (3)''; and

(ii) by striking ''paragraph (3)'' and inserting ''paragraph (4)'';

(C) in paragraph (2)(A)(i), by striking ''paragraph (3)'' and inserting ''paragraph (4)'';

(D) by redesignating paragraphs (4) and (5) as paragraphs (5) and (6), respectively;

(E) by inserting after paragraph (2) the following new paragraph:

''(3) PHA AUTHORITY TO ESTABLISH ALTERNATIVE RENTS.—

''(A) RENT FLEXIBILITY FOR PUBLIC HOUSING AND VOUCHER PROGRAM.—Subject to the requirements under subparagraph (B), a public housing agency may establish for public housing and for families on whose behalf assistance is provided under the program for tenant-based voucher assistance under section 8(o)—

''(i) a tenant rent structure in which—

''(I) the public housing agency establishes, based on the rental value of the unit, as determined by the public housing agency—

''(aa) a ceiling rent for each dwelling unit that it owns and operates; and

''(bb) a ceiling on the amount of the tenant contribution toward rent required of a family provided tenant-based assistance; and

''(II) such ceiling rent and tenant contribution are adjusted periodically on the basis of an inflation index or a recalculation of the rental value of the unit (which may be recalculated by unit or by building);

''(ii) an income-tiered tenant rent structure in which the amount of rent a family shall pay is set and distributed on the basis of broad tiers of income and such tiers and rents are adjusted on the basis of an annual cost index except that families entering public housing shall not be offered a rent lower than the rent corresponding to their income tier; or

''(iii) a tenant rent structure in which the amount of rent a family shall pay is based on a percentage of family income, except that lower percentages may apply only with respect to earned income; such a rent structure may provide for an amount of rent based on a calculation of earned income that provides for disregard of a higher percentage or higher dollar amount, or both, than provided for in paragraph (8)(B).

''(B) LIMITATION.—Notwithstanding the authority provided under subparagraph (A), the amount paid for rent (including the amount allowed for tenant-paid utilities) by any family for a dwelling unit in public housing or for rental of a dwelling unit for which tenant-based voucher assistance under section 8(o) is provided may not exceed the amount determined under subsection (a)(1) of this section or section 8(o), respectively. The Secretary shall issue regulations and establish procedures to ensure compliance with this subparagraph.

''(C) ELDERLY FAMILIES AND DISABLED FAMILIES.—Notwithstanding any other provision of this Act, this paragraph shall not apply to elderly families and disabled families.''; and

Page 9, line 14, strike ''(B)'' and insert ''(F)''.

Page 9, line 16, strike ''(6)'' and insert ''(7)''.

Page 12, line 19, strike ''(7)'' and insert ''(8)''.

Page 13, line 3, strike ''(6)(A)'' and insert ''(7)(A)''.

Page 13, line 18, strike ''(6)(B)(ii)'' and insert ''(7)(B)(ii)''.

Page 15, line 6, strike ''(6)'' and insert ''(7)''.

Page 19, line 13, strike ''(6) and (7)'' and insert ''(7) and (8)''.

Page 30, after line 11, insert the following:

''(xi) relocation and replacement of public housing units that are demolished or disposed of pursuant to eminent domain, pursuant to a homeownership program, or in connection with a mixed finance development method under section 35 or otherwise;''

Page 30, line 12, strike ''(xi)'' and insert ''(xii)''.

Page 30, line 15, strike ''(xii)'' and insert ''(xiii)''.

Page 30, line 24, strike ''or (x)'' and insert ''(x), or (xi)''.

Page 31, line 16, before the semicolon insert ''and of any incremental vouchers funded in previous years''.

Page 36, line 14, strike ''one twelfth'' and insert ''12.5 percent of''.

Page 39, lines 6 and 7, strike ''until superseded through subsequent rulemaking,''.

Page 57, after line 18, insert the following:

''(N) ADMINISTRATIVE FEE.—The administrative fee applicable to the administration of assistance under this paragraph shall be determined in the same manner as administrative fees applicable to other assistance administered under other provisions of this subsection.''.

Page 57, line 19, strike ''(N)'' and insert ''(O)''.

Page 68, line 6, after ''any agency'' insert ''that is a troubled agency under either such assessment program or''

Page 92, strike ''Not'' in line 5 and all that follows through ''the'' in line 9 and insert ''The''.

Strike line 24 on page 97 and all that follows through line 4 on page 98, and insert the following:

''(B) section 8(o), except for paragraph (11) and except as the requirements of section 8(o) are modified by subsection (e)(3) of this section.''.

Page 100, line 2, before the semicolon insert the following: '', except that no household may be prevented from occupying a replacement dwelling unit provided pursuant to clause (iii) except to the extent specifically provided by any other provision of Federal law (including subtitle F of title V of the Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act of 1998 (42 U.S.C. 13661 et seq.; relating to safety and security in public and assisted housing, subtitle D of title VI of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1992 (42 U.S.C. 13611 et seq.; relating to preferences for elderly and disabled residents), and section 16(f) of this Act (42 U.S.C. 1437n(f)); relating to ineligibility of persons convicted of methamphetamine offenses)''.

Page 101, line 22, strike '', dispose of, or eliminate'' and insert ''or dispose of''.

Page 102, strike lines 12 through 14 and insert the following:

''(b) The votes and agreements regarding the plan shall involve—

''(i) in the case of any public housing agency that administers 250 or fewer public housing dwelling units, not less than 10 percent of affected residents; and

''(ii) in the case of any public housing agency that administers more than 250 public housing dwelling units, not less than 25 affected residents''.

Page 103, strike lines 4 through 6 and insert the following: ''make available at least 30 percent of the total hours worked at all such employment, and shall also make available at least 25 percent of unskilled jobs in demolition activities and 25 percent of unskilled jobs in construction activities related to the redevelopment''.

Page 107, after line 2, insert the following new section:

SEC. 18. ACCESS TO HUD PROGRAMS FOR PERSONS WITH LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY.

(a) HUD RESPONSIBILITIES.—To allow the Department of Housing and Urban Development to better serve persons with limited proficiency in the English language by providing technical assistance to recipients of Federal funds, the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development shall take the following actions:

(1) TASK FORCE.—Within 90 days after the enactment of this Act, convene a task force comprised of appropriate industry groups, recipients of funds from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (in this section referred to as the ''Department''), community-based organizations that serve individuals with limited English proficiency, civil rights groups, and stakeholders, which shall identify a list of vital documents, including Department and certain property and other documents, to be competently translated to improve access to federally conducted and federally assisted programs and activities for individuals with limited English proficiency. The task force shall meet not less frequently than twice per year.

(2) TRANSLATIONS.—Within 6 months after identification of documents pursuant to paragraph (1), produce translations of the documents identified in all necessary languages and make such translations available as part of the library of forms available on the website of the Department and as part of the clearinghouse developed pursuant to paragraph (4).

(3) PLAN.—Develop and carry out a plan that includes providing resources of the Department to assist recipients of Federal funds to improve access to programs and activities for individuals with limited English proficiency, which plan shall include the elements described in paragraph (4).

(4) HOUSING INFORMATION RESOURCE CENTER.—Develop and maintain a housing information resource center to facilitate the provision of language services by providers of housing services to individuals with limited English proficiency. Information provided by such center shall be made available in printed form and through the Internet. The resources provided by the center shall include the following:

(A) TRANSLATION OF WRITTEN MATERIALS.—The center may provide, directly or through contract, vital documents from competent translation services for providers of housing services.

(B) TOLL-FREE CUSTOMER SERVICE TELEPHONE NUMBER.—The center shall provide a 24-hour toll-free interpretation service telephone line, by which recipients of funds of the Department and individuals with limited English proficiency may—

(i) obtain information about federally conducted or federally assisted housing programs of the Department;

(ii) obtain assistance with applying for or accessing such housing programs and understanding Federal notices written in English; and

(iii) communicate with housing providers. and learn how to access additional language services.

The toll-free telephone service provided pursuant to this subparagraph shall supplement resources in the community identified by the plan developed pursuant to paragraph (3).

(C) DOCUMENT CLEARINGHOUSE.—The center shall collect and evaluate for accuracy or develop, and make available, templates and documents that are necessary for consumers, relevant industry representatives, and other stakeholders of the Department, to access, make educated decisions, and communicate effectively about their housing, including—

(i) administrative and property documents;

(ii) legally binding documents;

(iii) consumer education and outreach materials;

(iv) documents regarding rights and responsibilities of any party; and

(v) remedies available to consumers.

(D) STUDY OF LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS.—The center shall conduct a study that evaluates best-practices models for all programs of the Department that promote language assistance and strategies to improve language services for individuals with limited English proficiency. Not later than 18 months after the date of the enactment of this Act, the center shall submit a report to the Committee on Financial Services of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs of the Senate, which shall provide recommendations for implementation, specific to programs of the Department, and information and templates that could be made available to all recipients of grants from the Department.

(E) CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC COMPETENCE MATERIALS.—The center shall provide information relating to culturally and linguistically competent housing services for populations with limited English proficiency.

(b) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There are authorized to be appropriated such sums as may be necessary to carry out subsection (a).

(c) REPORT.—Not later than the expiration of the 6-month period beginning on the date of the enactment of this Act, and annually thereafter, the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development shall submit a report regarding its compliance with the requirements under subsection (a) to the Committee on Financial Services of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs of the Senate.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to House Resolution 534, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATERS) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

MODIFICATION TO AMENDMENT NO. 1 OFFERED BY MS. WATERS

Ms. WATERS. Madam Chairman, I ask unanimous consent that the amendment be modified by the form I have placed at the desk.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The Clerk will report the modification.

The Clerk read as follows:

Modification to amendment No. 1 offered by Ms. WATERS:

The amendment is modified as follows:

In the matter proposed to be inserted by the eighth amendment instruction of the amendment (which begins ''Page 8, strike 'before' in line 12''), strike ''The agency shall provide the family'' and all that follows through ''relocation of the family to a new residence.''.

Strike the matter proposed to be inserted by the amendment at page 8 of the bill, after line 16, and insert the following:

''(vi) RELOCATION.—If the public housing agency terminates the housing assistance payments contract for a dwelling unit, the lease for any family residing in that unit shall terminate and the family may remain in the unit subject to a new lease as an unassisted family. The agency shall provide the family residing in such a dwelling unit a period of 90 days, beginning upon termination of the contract, to lease a new residence to assist with the tenant-based rental assistance made available under this section for the family. If the family is unable to lease such a new residence during such period, the public housing agency shall extend the period during which the family may lease a new residence to be assisted with such assistance or provide such family a preference for occupancy in a dwelling unit of public housing owned or operated by the agency that first becomes available for occupancy after the expiration of such period. The agency shall provide reasonable assistance to the family in finding a new residence, including use of two months of any assistance amounts withheld pursuant to clause (ii) for costs associated with relocation of the family to a new residence.

''(vii) LIMITATION OF LIABILITY OF PUBLIC HOUSING AGENCIES.—A public housing agency that uses its authority under clause (iii) shall not, if the agency accomplishes the work through a contractor that is licensed, bonded, and insured in amounts and with coverage as required by the Secretary, be liable for any injury or damages that may result to persons or to any property owned by the tenant or owner.

''(viii) TENANT-CAUSED DAMAGES.—If a public housing agency determines that any damage to a dwelling unit that results in a failure of the dwelling unit to comply with housing quality standards under subparagraph (B), other than any damage resulting from ordinary use, was caused by the tenant, any member of the tenant's household, or any guest or other person under the tenant's control, the agency may, in the discretion of the agency, waive the applicability of this subparagraph, except that this clause shall not exonerate a tenant from any liability otherwise existing under applicable law for damages to the premises caused by such tenant.''.

Strike the matter proposed to be inserted by the amendment at page 8 of the bill, line 17, and insert ''(ix)''.

Ms. WATERS (during the reading). Madam Chairman, I ask unanimous consent to dispense with the reading of the amendment.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from California?

There was no objection.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Without objection, the amendment is modified.

There was no objection.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California.

Ms. WATERS. Thank you very much, Madam Chairman.

I would like to thank the distinguished chairman of the Committee on Financial Services, Mr. BARNEY FRANK, and Ranking Member JUDY BIGGERT for their strong support of the manager's amendment to H.R. 1851.

The purpose of the amendment is to reform and improve the Section 8 Voucher Reform Act of 2007, regarding inspections, flexibility in rent-setting, transitional funding for the Nation's Public Housing Agencies, administrative fee calculations, limited English proficiency requirements, and the Housing Innovation Program. It also makes technical corrections to the bill.

The amendment provides more flexibility to make inspections by requiring them less frequently than every 2 years. This change will allow PHAs in areas with a deteriorating housing stock to conduct additional inspections in order to make sure families are housed in safe and decent units. In addition, the amendment fills the need for inspections that can be conducted at the request of the tenant within a specific amount of time.

My amendment solves a real catch-22 that often arises in the section 8 program. Many section 8 landlords are not large real estate concerns, but mom-and-pop operations that are not getting rich. Where units operated by a landlord fail inspection, right now there is a real danger that the landlord will choose to leave the program rather than make the repairs. This benefits nobody. And there is the catch-22. The landlord wants to stay in the program; the tenant certainly wants to stay in the unit if it can be repaired; but current law makes this positive resolution difficult to achieve.

PHAs will have the option to make repairs on the landlord's behalf. If the PHA or the landlord choose not to make the repair, the amendment protects tenants who will have to move to a new unit through no fault of their own. In the event a PHA chooses not to make a repair and the landlord still declines to repair the unit, the amendment provides important tenant protections.

There is rent flexibility. Sometimes the rigid section 8 rent structure just

doesn't work. In order to find a rent mechanism that works, the amendment gives PHAs flexibility in setting rents. While the calculations may be different, the amendment preserves affordability standards that limit the amount of rent a tenant pays to 30 percent of his or her income. The 30 percent threshold is sacred, because we all know that if the rent exceeds this amount, tenants lose the ability to make ends meet.

When we move to a new funding formula, PHAs will need sufficient reserves to allow them to make the change smoothly and with little disruption for tenants. H.R. 1851 provides a 1-month reserve for the first year of the formula. But to ensure that PHAs are able to serve additional families in the formula's first year, the amendment moderately increases this reserve from the 1-month level to the 1½-month level. This ensures PHAs will have adequate funds to transition.

The amendment corrects the disparity between the calculation of the administrative fees for project-based units owned by PHAs and other units in the PHA's inventory. Units owned by PHAs would receive the same fee as other units receiving project-based assistance in the PHA's inventory, providing an incentive for PHAs to create housing opportunities by project-basing its own units.

The amendment also addresses HUD's problematic implementation of Limitation of English Proficiency requirements. The manager's amendment seeks to remedy this problem. The amendment calls for HUD to convene a task force of interested parties and stakeholders who will determine the documents that need to be translated, and to make these translations available in various languages within 6 months. HUD is also required to maintain a housing information resource center, including a 24-hour toll-free number and a document clearinghouse.

We also include Housing Innovation Program, that is HIP program, formerly known as Moving to Work, and this amendment makes several corrections to the Housing Innovation Program formerly called Moving to Work. These changes clarify that troubled agencies are not eligible to participate in the program, clarifies resident participation requirements, specifies job opportunities to be made for residents, and ensures that following demolition or replacement of public housing units, that families cannot be screened out of public housing unless they are otherwise ineligible under Federal law.

I ask support for the manager's amendment.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mrs. BIGGERT. Madam Chairman, I ask unanimous consent to claim the time in opposition, although I am not opposed to the amendment.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Without objection, the gentlewoman from Illinois is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

Mrs. BIGGERT. I would like to thank Chairwoman WATERS for her manager's amendment and, in particular, the 12.5 percent for the transition in the public housing.

Madam Chair, I yield to my colleague, Mr. MILLER of California, for the balance of the time.

Mr. GARY G. MILLER of California. I want to thank you for including my language on reform in the manager's amendment. This I believe goes a long way to create innovation in helping people gain self-sufficiency.

The main reason I want to speak today is because many on my side have a real problem with the requirement that language be translated into a language that anybody who might come to a HUD assistance program might require to speak, and your bill goes a long way.

I have consistently supported every effort to repeal President Clinton's executive order which requires any recipient of Federal funds to provide translations into any language an individual requesting service may speak; but recently, HUD has issued a requirement that says that any housing authority or PHA must provide this translation to individuals who come before them.

This is the Federal Government creating a mandate and requiring the private sector to pay the bill. And what you are doing I wholeheartedly support. You are saying that if the Federal Government wants to require a mandate, then they should pay the bill. It has been estimated that one of these translations can cost a section 8 individual or group or housing authority up to $10,000 for each language they want to translate the documents into, and what you are doing is absolutely correct. If we are not going to change the law, then let's not have an unfunded mandate placed on the private sector that the private sector has to pay for when HUD and the Federal Government wants to mandate it. And what you are saying is: HUD, if you want to mandate it, you pick up the bill. And I think that is very important that we do this, and I want to stand up saying I wholeheartedly support it.

I do not support the mandate, period, that Clinton imposed, but we are stuck with it. It is an executive order. And what you are saying is the private sector should not be suffering the burden of an unfunded mandate if the Federal Government wants to mandate it.

So I want to clarify for my side that what we are doing here is saying we are relieving an unfunded mandate on the private sector and placing the burden on the Federal Government, who should be responsible. And if we want to change the law, let's change the law. But until we change the law, the private sector should not suffer the burden of financing something the Federal Government is imposing on them.

I wholeheartedly support the manager's amendment, and I thank you for working with me on rent reform and other things.

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Madam Chairman, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. GARY G. MILLER of California. I yield to the gentleman from Massachusetts.

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. The gentleman has given a very clear statement of what is in here. This bill does not create the bilingual mandate; it puts it where it should be.

The other thing I would say is this, and I understand there are some who oppose it on principle. But from the court's standpoint, having HUD do the translation of all these documents means that they don't have to be done individually. So it also is cheaper for HUD to do. It is not just that it is more appropriate for the Federal Government to do it, but it is cheaper, because there will be some basic HUD documents so this will avoid the unnecessary duplication of translations. And I thank the gentleman for that very clear way he stated it.

Mr. GARY G. MILLER of California. Reclaiming my time, I think you are right. It is cheaper for us to pay for shipping than it is for them to pay for translations. Let's do it one time, ship the documents, and we deal with the problem, unless we want to change the law.

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. The gentleman and I are of a similar generation. It is my understanding from some of my younger staffers that they don't ship documents these days; they have other ways of getting them there. I couldn't send one, myself, and my friend couldn't receive it. But, fortunately, it wouldn't be up to us.

Mr. GARY G. MILLER of California. Reclaiming my time, we dinosaurs have to speak in the language we are accustomed to.

And with that, this dinosaur yields back the balance of his time.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The gentlewoman from California has 30 seconds remaining.

Ms. WATERS. Madam Chairman, I ask for support for the manager's amendment to H.R. 1851 and passage of the bill. Again, I want to thank each of my colleagues who worked on this important amendment for their strong support.

I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATERS), as modified.

The amendment, as modified, was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 2 OFFERED BY MS. VELÁZQUEZ

The Acting CHAIRMAN. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 2 printed in House Report 110–227.

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Madam Chairman, I offer an amendment.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Amendment No. 2 offered by Ms. VELÁZQUEZ:

Page 80, line 5, after ''8(o)(7)'' insert ''and section 8(o)(20)''.

Page 81, after line 10, insert the following:

''(N) Sections 8(ee) and 6(u) (relating to records, certification and confidentiality regarding domestic violence).''.

Page 81, line 11, strike ''(N)'' and insert ''(O)''.

Page 81, line 13, strike ''(O)'' and insert ''(P)''.

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The Acting CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to House Resolution 534, the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. VELÁZQUEZ) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from New York.

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Madam Chairman, I yield myself as much time as I may consume.

Madam Chairman, let me first commend Chairman FRANK and Chairwoman WATERS for their leadership in moving this necessary reform forward. They led the Financial Services Committee through a healthy but complicated series of issues and produced a bill that truly improves the section 8 program.

Section 8 is the Nation's largest low-income housing program. It currently enables more than 2 million low-income families to fulfill the basic needs of shelter. We should strive to help more people find safe and decent housing. That is why this bill includes 100,000 new vouchers over the next 5 years. It is critical that we support this bipartisan work that transitions people out of poverty.

Keeping people safe is at the heart of my amendment, which may seem minor, but provides important eviction and privacy protection for victims of domestic violence who live in section 8 housing. Let us not allow domestic violence victims to fall through the cracks.

It does this by ensuring that residents are not evicted simply because they are victims of domestic violence. While it is hard to believe, under current law, if a resident is visited by a former spouse, a stalker or domestic abuser, and he breaks down the door, the very noise and property damage caused by the dispute could be grounds for her to be evicted. Being abused should not be cause for terminating a lease. My amendment changes that by protecting section 8 tenants from wrongful eviction.

It is fundamentally wrong to evict a resident because they have been victimized. The individuals and their families deserve our respect and understanding. This provision ensures that domestic violence victims have a safe home for them and their families.

Second, my amendment protects the record of domestic violence victims. If certain identifying characteristics are made public, even to a prospective landlord, abusers could use the information to locate their victims. This goes beyond just name and Social Security number. The key is making sure that their information is protected so that victims move forward without the fear of being found. Their safety must be first and foremost. Let's give section 8 tenants basic protections to ensure they can find and keep a safe home away from violence.

Madam Chairwoman, I support the improvements to the section 8 program that H.R. 1851 makes and want to thank Chairman FRANK and Chairwoman WATERS again for their diligence on this bill. I think it is important that we remember that finding a home entails feeling safe, not just securing shelter.

In 2005, we fought in unison to protect domestic violence victims through VAWA; 415 Members of the 109th Congress supported these provisions back then. Today I am asking you to close a potential loophole for section 8 housing residents who are victims of domestic violence. I urge a ''yes'' vote on my amendment and the underlying bill.

Madam Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mrs. BIGGERT. I ask unanimous consent to claim the time in opposition to the amendment, although I am not opposed to the amendment.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Without objection, the gentlewoman from Illinois is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

Mrs. BIGGERT. Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Violence Against Women Act reauthorized and signed into law by President Bush in 2005 ensured that victims of domestic violence would not be evicted from public or section 8 housing for screaming for help, for calling the police or simply for being the victim of a crime. However, one provision of H.R. 1851 inadvertently removes these protections from certain public housing authorities, leaving victims in these housing authorities with inconsistent or no protection.

I think that the Housing Innovation Program provisions in SEVRA exempt high-performing public housing authorities from certain Federal regulations, giving them a measure of regulatory reform. Unfortunately, some of the VAWA protections were among those that would no longer apply to these high-performing housing authorities. This would create confusion for public housing authorities and leave victims vulnerable to eviction after an assault.

I support the amendment, and appreciate this being added to the bill.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. I thank the gentlelady for supporting my amendment.

I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. VELÁZQUEZ).

The amendment was agreed to.

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Madam Chair, I ask unanimous consent that I be substituted for the gentlewoman from California as the manager for the remainder of the bill.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Massachusetts?

There was no objection.

AMENDMENT NO. 3 OFFERED BY MR. GARY G. MILLER OF CALIFORNIA

The Acting CHAIRMAN. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 3 printed in House Report 110–227.

Mr. GARY G. MILLER of California. Madam Chair, I offer an amendment.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Amendment No. 3 offered by Mr. GARY G. MILLER of California:

Page 28, after line 11, insert the following new section:

SEC. 6. TIME LIMITATION ON ASSISTANCE.

Section 16 of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437n), as amended by the preceding provisions of this Act, is further amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

''(g) TIME LIMITATION ON SECTION 8 ASSISTANCE.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in this subsection and notwithstanding any other provision of this Act, assistance under section 8 may not be provided on behalf of any family that includes a member who has previously been provided such assistance for 84 months (whether or not consecutive) or longer.

''(2) EXCEPTION FOR ELDERLY AND DISABLED FAMILIES.—In determining the number of months for which an individual has been provided assistance under section 8, for purposes of paragraph (1), a public housing agency shall disregard any month during which such individual was a member of a disabled or elderly family so assisted.

''(3) AUTHORITY FOR HARDSHIP EXEMPTIONS.—A public housing agency may exempt a family from the application of paragraph (1) by reason of hardship, subject to the following requirements:

''(A) The agency shall define the reasons for, and terms under which, a hardship exemption may be granted, which may include mental illness and disability that is not sufficient to qualify the individual for benefits under the program of supplemental security income benefits under title XVI of the Social Security Act.

''(B) The agency shall establish a plan to provide appropriate case management planning and services for the families for which such an exemption is granted.

''(4) LIMITATION ON EXEMPTIONS.—Subject to paragraph (5), the average monthly number of families with respect to which an exemption is made under paragraph (3) by a public housing agency shall not exceed 20 percent of the average monthly number of families on behalf of whom assistance is provided under section 8 during the fiscal year or the immediately preceding fiscal year (but not both), as the agency may elect.

''(5) REQUEST FOR ADDITIONAL EXEMPTIONS.—Upon the request of a public housing agency, the Secretary may increase the number of families with respect to which an exemption may be made under paragraph (3) by the agency above the limitation provided in paragraph (4).

''(6) APPLICABILITY.—In determining the number of months for which an individual has been provided assistance under section 8, for purposes of paragraph (1), a public housing agency shall disregard any month that commenced before the date of the enactment

of the Section 8 Voucher Reform Act of 2007.''.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to House Resolution 534, the gentleman from California (Mr. GARY G. MILLER) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

Mr. GARY G. MILLER of California. Madam Chair, I rise today to offer an amendment with my colleague from Ohio (Mr. CHABOT) to limit the amount of time a section 8 recipient may receive housing assistance.

I believe this amendment offers a reasonable approach to a very difficult issue. The intent of this amendment is not to be harsh or uncaring. If you read the amendment, you will see that we provide exemptions for the elderly, for the disabled and for hardship.

This amendment is an attempt to inject fairness into this program, where we are faced with the fiscal reality that we do not have the resources to provide unlimited housing assistance to all those who want to participate in the program.

This amendment will help those who have been waiting a long time for their turn for the helping hand.

When we started working on section 8 reform legislation a couple of years ago, I asked my staff to review all the casework inquiries we had received from constituents about the section 8 program. This review revealed that section 8 recipients weren't contacting me to help them with problems with their housing or HUD regulations; the constituents who had contacted my office were complaining about the fact that they had been on the section 8 waiting list for years and were just as in need as those who are receiving assistance currently.

According to HUD, the average length of time families spend on the waiting list for subsidized housing in the United States is more than 2 years. In cities like Los Angeles, the waiting list is approaching 10 years.

How can we justify a situation where one person is given unlimited Federal housing assistance, while another who might have greater need is on the waiting list and unable to participate in the program for almost 10 years?

The answer is not to allow this program to continue to grow out of control by providing more vouchers. Rather, we must reform the program so that participants can transition into self-sufficiency within a reasonable period of time.

The answer is to institute a reasonable time limit for assistance, which would give more families the ability to benefit from our Nation's temporary helping hand.

The amendment I offer today is based on the successful reform we made to the welfare program in 1996. Under the amendment, the maximum amount of time during which a family may receive section 8 assistance is 7 years. Time limits would not apply to elderly or disabled families.

In addition, there is a hardship exemption for families who need extra time due to circumstances beyond their control.

While some might argue that we should increase the number of section 8 vouchers that are available so we can serve all those who are on the waiting list, the practical reality is that we cannot already sustain the growth in the current section 8 program. Our aim should be not to expand the program more but instead reform it to allow it to provide assistance to more people.

Even with the section 8 program growing out of control, it is not helping all the people that it could. This amendment is one way to ensure that our Federal limited resources may be used to help all those who need help.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Madam Chair, I rise to claim the time in opposition. And unlike my distinguished friend, the gentlewoman from Illinois, I'm really in opposition.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The gentleman from Massachusetts is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. I yield myself 3 minutes.

First, Madam Chair, in the interest of conciliation that has marked this debate, I would say to my friend from California, I would be willing to accept this amendment that puts a time limit on people being able to stay in section 8 if we could work out a time limit on their being poor. I think it is entirely accurate that when you're no longer poor, you should no longer be able to live in section 8. But what if we can't?

I can understand people who think that there are adults who have not been very responsible in their life choices, but some of the adults come with children. The gentleman exempts the disabled and the elderly, but his amendment does not exempt families with small children. So you have a parent with children.

Mr. GARY G. MILLER of California. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. I yield to the gentleman from California.

Mr. GARY G. MILLER of California. The intent of this amendment is to allow for hardship cases like that. A single mother who has young children would be a hardship.

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Would the gentleman point that out to me in the amendment?

Mr. GARY G. MILLER of California. We tried to allow the Housing Authority——

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. No. They have a certain number. They can make certain exemptions up to 20 percent.

Mr. GARY G. MILLER of California. On page 2, hardship exemption, number 3. It allows the housing authority to create exemptions for families in a hardship. And that would be one of the exemptions.

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Yes, not exceeding more than 20 percent of the families. It doesn't single out children. Well, maybe there will be 30 or 40 percent, because in my experience, it may differ, you say make an exception for a hardship. That's not the exception for people in section 8; it's the rule. There aren't a lot of rich people living in section 8 or middle income people.

The fact is that under the gentleman's amendment, if adopted, there will be single parents with children of 7 or 8 or 10 years old, several of them, and at the end of 5 years, they'll have to move. Those kids didn't do anything to anybody.

And you know what we've learned from education and from homelessness, 7 years, the gentleman tells me. He does give them 7 years. It's very biblical. But they'll still have to move after 7 years.

Churning poor people isn't useful. Making people move isn't useful. We've adopted some rules here. The gentleman knows we agreed with him that we should not charge them for more rent if they're making more money. We don't want to have a disincentive. We've done other things to improve it.

But here's a fundamental point. People in section 8 housing are there because they meet strict income criteria. Under the gentleman's amendment, someone who continues to be poor, who continues to meet the income criteria, who has lived up to every rule, who has small children, who has tried diligently to get a better job, but in many parts of this country, by the way, we're talking about working people. There are many people who can work full-time at twice the minimum wage and not be able to afford rental housing in his district or in parts of my district or in other districts, the gentlewoman from California's district. And they'd be evicted. They'd be evicted from housing that they were eligible for, for no reason other than the clock.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. GARY G. MILLER of California. I yield the balance of time to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. CHABOT).

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The gentleman from Ohio is recognized for 2½ minutes.

Mr. CHABOT. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

I would just note that I don't think we are doing those kids living in section 8 housing any favors by encouraging a life or a lifestyle of living in section 8 housing. I think we're doing them a great disservice.

And I want to thank the gentleman from California for his efforts to bring more accountability and responsibility to the section 8 program, a program that, let's face it, is in need of fundamental reform.

Madam Chair, this is a very straightforward and commonsense amendment, and again, I want to commend the gentleman for offering it. It would simply place a time limit, one that I believe is generous, on able-bodied individuals currently receiving housing assistance through the section 8 program.

Under current law, there are no time limits. Those on section 8 can remain on section 8 for as long as they qualify.

Is that fair to the taxpayers? No. Is it fair to the section 8 recipients who become trapped in a life of dependency or to their children? I don't think so. Is it fair that the current lack of time limits prevent those on the waiting list, who may have fallen on hard times and are genuinely looking for a temporary helping hand, from receiving help? I don't think so.

Madam Chair, I would submit that the current lack of time limits isn't fair to anyone.

We've seen the positive effects that time limits and work requirements can have on social programs. We need look no further back in history than the 1996 Temporary Assistance For Needy Families, or the welfare reform law, that reformed the old welfare system, a system that had trapped so many into a life of dependency and poverty. And the old welfare system bears a remarkable resemblance to the section 8 program. And I think that's just unacceptable.

We can do better in this country than section 8 housing and condemning both adults and children to the conditions that they have to live in, in my community in Cincinnati or communities all over the country. Section 8 housing is not the type of lifestyle that I think we want to condemn those people living in them or their children to.

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And I don't think the taxpayers ought to be required to pay for this subsidized housing forever in some cases.

Mr. GARY G. MILLER of California. Madam Chairman, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. CHABOT. I would be happy to yield to the gentleman from California.

Mr. GARY G. MILLER of California. I think, Mr. FRANK, you know my heart, and you and I have worked on a lot of stuff. I think Mr. CHABOT and I would be willing to accept a 50-percent exemption for single mothers with multiple children who have a hardship, who are unable to move in the sector. So we are willing to cooperate. We are not trying to throw mothers with children out of the home.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The gentleman's time has expired.

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Madam Chairman, I would say to my friend from California, work on that in a future amendment and we will look at it.

But I want to address the gentleman from Ohio. He says he wants to help these people and save them. Boy, would they be in trouble if somebody came to hurt them. He is going to help them by evicting them when they remain economically eligible. And he says it is encouraging dependence.

In fact, in many parts of this country, you can be making two and three times the minimum wage and not be able to afford decent rental housing, and that is who gets the section 8.

And then he says that section 8 housing is so terrible that we have to keep people from having to live there. But does the gentleman think that there are people who say, ''You know what? I can live in a nice place or I can live in a lousy place. I think I'll choose a lousy place until the gentleman from Ohio comes along and rescues me from it''?

People live in the best place available to them, and throwing them out of the place they now live in when they have done nothing wrong because you don't think it is good enough for them when there is no alternative that is as good is hardly helping them.

The section 8 program is one that serves many people who work. It is a sliding scale of subsidy, and to say that it encourages dependency totally misunderstands the program. Many of these people are people who are working and they work at low-wage jobs in areas with high rent. How are you encouraging dependency by telling them and their children that after 7 years they go out? What kind of an incentive is that?

So, Madam Chairman, this amendment takes people who have already been in some economic difficulty and makes their lives harder. I hope that it is rejected.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. GARY G. MILLER).

The question was taken; and the Acting Chairman announced that the noes appeared to have it.

Mr. GARY G. MILLER of California. Madam Chairman, I demand a recorded vote.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to clause 6 of rule XVIII, further proceedings on the amendment offered by the gentleman from California will be postponed.

AMENDMENT NO. 4 OFFERED BY MR. MARKEY

The Acting CHAIRMAN. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 4 printed in House Report 110–227.

Mr. MARKEY. Madam Chairman, I offer an amendment.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Amendment No. 4 offered by Mr. MARKEY:

Page 64, line 20, before ''Subparagraph'' insert ''(a) TREATMENT OF UNIT AND FAMILY SIZE.—''.

Page 65, after line 2, insert the following:

(b) ELIGIBILITY OF CERTAIN PROJECTS.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law—

(1) the property known as The Heritage Apartments (FHA No. 023-44804), in Malden, Massachusetts, shall be considered eligible low-income housing for purposes of the eligibility of residents of the property for enhanced voucher assistance under section 8(t) of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437f(t)), pursuant to paragraph (2)(A) of section 223(f) of the Low-Income Housing Preservation and Resident Homeownership Act of 1990 (12 U.S.C. 4113(f)(2)(A));

(2) such residents shall receive enhanced rental housing vouchers upon the prepayment of the mortgage loan for the property under section 236 of the National Housing Act (12 U.S.C. 1715z–1); and

(3) the Secretary shall approve such prepayment and subsequent transfer of the property without any further condition, except that the property shall be restricted for occupancy, until the original maturity date of the prepaid mortgage loan, only by families with incomes not exceeding 80 percent of the adjusted median income for the area in which the property is located, as published by the Secretary.

Amounts for the enhanced vouchers pursuant to this subsection shall be provided under amounts appropriated for tenant-based rental assistance otherwise authorized under section 8(t) of the United States Housing Act of 1937.

Page 107, after line 2, insert the following new section:

SEC. 18. TRANSFER OF CERTAIN RENTAL ASSISTANCE CONTRACTS.

(a) TRANSFER.—Subject to subsection (c) and notwithstanding any other provision of law, the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development shall, at the request of the owner, transfer or authorize the transfer, of the contracts, restrictions, and debt described in subsection (b)—

(1) on the housing that is owned or managed by Community Properties of Ohio Management Services LLC or an affiliate of Ohio Capital Corporation for Housing and located in Franklin County, Ohio, to other properties located in Franklin County, Ohio; and

(2) on the housing that is owned or managed by The Model Group, Inc., and located in Hamilton County, Ohio, to other properties located in Hamilton County, Ohio.

(b) CONTRACTS, RESTRICTIONS, AND DEBT COVERED.—The contracts, restrictions, and debt described in this subsection are as follows:

(1) All or a portion of a project-based rental assistance housing assistance payments contract under section 8 of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437f).

(2) Existing Federal use restrictions, including without limitation use agreements, regulatory agreements, and accommodation agreements.

(3) Any subordinate debt held by the Secretary or assigned and any mortgages securing such debt, all related loan and security documentation and obligations, and reserve and escrow balances.

(c) RETENTION OF SAME NUMBER OF UNITS AND AMOUNT OF ASSISTANCE.—Any transfer pursuant to subsection (a) shall result in—

(1) a total number of dwelling units (including units retained by the owners and units transferred) covered by assistance described in subsection (b)(1) after the transfer remaining the same as such number assisted before the transfer, with such increases or decreases in unit sizes as may be contained in a plan approved by a local planning or development commission or department; and

(2) no reduction in the total amount of the housing assistance payments under contracts described in subsection (b)(1).

(d) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This section shall take effect on the date of the enactment of this Act.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to House Resolution 534, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MARKEY) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Massachusetts.

Mr. MARKEY. Madam Chairman, I rise with an amendment that I am making in conjunction with the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. PRYCE). Our

language seeks to make some technical corrections to ensure that affordable housing is preserved in three housing developments, two located in Ohio and one in Massachusetts.

The low-income tenants of the Heritage Apartments in Malden, Massachusetts, are facing possible displacement once an outstanding HUD mortgage is fully paid in a few years. The development is also in need of major renovations and upgrades that simply cannot be delayed. Unfortunately, HUD is failing to ensure that the development remains affordable and livable by placing burdensome regulations and restrictions on prepayment of the outstanding mortgage and subsequent transfer to a new owner who is willing to finance the renovations. My amendment would allow income-eligible residents to qualify for enhanced housing vouchers following the prepayment of the HUD mortgage and the property transfer and directs HUD to approve such actions.

I will defer to the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. PRYCE) to explain the portion of our amendment which deals with maintaining affordability in housing developments located in her congressional district in Ohio.

The Congressional Budget Office has determined that adoption of this language would result in $1 million in net savings to current mandatory spending over the next 5 years because HUD is currently paying mortgage interest reduction payments for the development which would be nullified upon adoption of the Markey-Pryce amendment.

The amendment is supported by the chairman of the committee and the ranking member. It is also supported by the Institute of Real Estate Management, National Apartment Association, and the National Association of Home Builders. And I urge adoption of the amendment.

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Madam Chairman, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. MARKEY. I yield to the gentleman from Massachusetts.

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Madam Chairman, I thank my friend and colleague for yielding.

And I want to say, as I said to the gentleman from California (Mr. CAMPBELL), people are saying why are you making this exception. We are making this exception because we think this ought to be the rule. And we are dealing with this now because we have time problems in this area and in the area of the gentlewoman from Ohio. But it is our intention to pass legislation before the end of the year, I think on a bipartisan basis, that will make this a rule for the whole country. So this is not singling out any one area except for the fact that we face time restraints, as the gentleman from California did and the gentleman from Ohio did.

So I want to thank my friend for bringing this forward. And I want to make it clear this is the first step of what we believe will be a general policy of preserving affordable housing.

Mr. MARKEY. Madam Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mrs. BIGGERT. Madam Chairman, I ask unanimous consent to claim the time in opposition to the amendment, although I am not opposed to the amendment.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Without objection, the gentlewoman from Illinois is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

Mrs. BIGGERT. Madam Chairman, the gentlewoman from Ohio is unable to get here in the length of time needed, so I would just say that we support the amendment.

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio. Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of the Markey/Pryce amendment to H.R. 1851.

This amendment includes important language, which I authored, to permit the transfer of project-based Section 8 rent assistance from concentrated, blight-ridden areas in Columbus and Cincinnati, Ohio to less precarious, rehabilitated living conditions. The affected neighborhoods all have high poverty rates, a high number of assisted housing units, high crime rates, and dilapidated buildings.

This transfer would have no additional cost to the Federal Government. The language preserves the exact same number of assisted units and the same dollar amount of Federal assistance.

The benefits to the community and to the tenants are immeasurable. Though struggling, each of these neighborhoods has seen an increasing amount of public and private scrutiny and investment. Low income and other residents alike would share in the benefits of a safer, more stable, and more thriving neighborhood. This proposal would allow the community to find more productive and beneficial uses for the properties.

This proposal has widespread support from both communities. Tenants, community advocates, government officials, and private developers alike—all support the neighborhoods' improvement.

Madam Speaker, I would not be here today if for the past 6 years in Columbus the community had not explored other possible solutions with the Department of Housing and Urban Development, tenants, advocates, the City of Columbus, the Ohio State University officials, contractors, and other key stakeholders, but statutory restrictions constantly impeded progress.

We find ourselves here, not as a first resort, but as a last.

I would like to thank Chairman FRANK and Ranking Member BACHUS for their support, and my colleague from Massachusetts for working with me to enact this important fix into law.

I thank my colleagues for consideration of this amendment and urge your support.

Mr. BIGGERT. Madam Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. MARKEY. Madam Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MARKEY).

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 5 OFFERED BY MR. CHABOT

The Acting CHAIRMAN. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 5 printed in House Report 110–227.

Mr. CHABOT. Madam Chairman, I offer an amendment.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Amendment No. 5 offered by Mr. CHABOT:

Page 107, strike lines 3 through 9.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to House Resolution 534, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. CHABOT) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Ohio.

Mr. CHABOT. Madam Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

This is one of three amendments that I am offering this evening, two of the three with a couple of my colleagues, one Mr. MILLER from California and Mr. HENSARLING from Texas, that would encourage fundamental reforms in the section 8 program.

When we committed ourselves to welfare reform, it was the understanding that the program should no longer be a taxpayer-funded handout but should instead offer people a way out of poverty, helping them obtain job and education skills that are needed to become ultimately self-sufficient. Ending welfare's cycle of dependency has cut the welfare rolls in half, promoted individual responsibility, and saved billions of tax dollars in the process. Sadly, current housing programs closely resemble the failed welfare policies of the past. Like the old welfare programs, the section 8 housing program, unfortunately, discourages work and allows people to stay, in fact, encourages them to stay on the program, oftentimes indefinitely. It is also too often mismanaged by local governments or local housing authorities.

Unfortunately, this bill does not address those issues but instead expands the program to 100,000 new section 8 vouchers at the cost of approximately 2.4 billion taxpayer dollars over the next 5 years. That is 100,000, approximately, more recipients that get a chunk of the rent that is ultimately going to be picked up by their fellow taxpayers and ultimately, in my view, doesn't do the people that become dependent upon this good in the long term. That is 100,000 more recipients who don't have to work to stay in the program, and that is 100,000 recipients that are being supported by the American taxpayers for as long as they like since section 8 now imposes no time limits on the beneficiaries.

I represent most of the city of Cincinnati and its western suburbs and a few townships in Butler County, Ohio. Too many neighborhoods in my district have had to witness crime, despair, and hopelessness that are inherent in a government program that asks virtually nothing of its recipients, that encourages dependency rather than responsibility and waste, unfortunately, rather than work. Whether it is the

funding provided by the Federal Government or mismanagement of the program by local governments and agencies, section 8 has failed those who use it and those who pay for it: the American taxpayers.

My amendment is straightforward. It would simply stop throwing good money after bad and seeks to prevent more Americans from falling victim to a life of dependency on the government. My amendment would simply prohibit the dollars this bill authorizes from being spent on the 100,000 new vouchers that this legislation would create.

It is also important to point out that the dependency that section 8 has created is so great that there are long waiting lists to get vouchers. Why? Because many of those who gain access to the program ultimately don't leave. They don't really have an incentive to. The average stay is about 7 years.

Madam Chairman, if we simply put time limits and meaningful work requirements in the program, as the amendments that I have offered with Mr. MILLER and Mr. HENSARLING would do, there wouldn't be a need to create more vouchers because people would be moving through the system, moving toward independence and a better life, and that nondependence on the government is what every American should want.

Madam Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. AL GREEN of Texas. Madam Chairman, I rise to claim the time in opposition to the amendment.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The gentleman from Texas is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. AL GREEN of Texas. Madam Chairman, allow me to first thank the chairperson of the Financial Services Committee, Chairperson Frank. He has done an outstanding job with his leadership. I also thank the Honorable MAXINE WATERS, the subcommittee chairperson, for her sound stewardship; and, of course, Ranking Member BACHUS for his bipartisanship because it helped to synthesize this piece of legislation. And I also thank the cosponsorship of Congresswoman BIGGERT. She has been cogent with her cosponsorship.

Madam Chairman, let me simply say that this is bipartisan legislation that we are talking about and the striking of the 100,000 vouchers over 5 years will put an end to what started as bipartisan legislation in the committee. This was passed overwhelmingly in the committee, and it was supported by the ranking member of the committee.

This is not, as was indicated, a handout. It is really a hand up for the disabled. It is a hand up for the elderly. And it also benefits low-income to extremely low-income persons, many of whom are working and still not in a position to afford affordable housing. Many of them need the kind of help that this bill is providing.

The truth is, and you shall know the truth, and it will set you free. So at this moment, I am going to take the ax of truth, slam it into the tree of circumstance, and let the chips fall wherever they may. The truth is one in seven households in this country spends more than 50 percent of their income on housing. Three-quarters of a million people are homeless on any given night in this country. Congress has not provided new section 8 vouchers since 2002. The truth is we can pay for one of these vouchers with 2 seconds of what we spend on the war in Iraq. We can pay for all of these vouchers with what we spend on 2½ days in Iraq. The truth is the need exists for these vouchers. The truth is it is time for Congress to act and to authorize these new section 8 vouchers.

Madam Chairman, at this time I would like to yield 1 minute to my outstanding colleague Congressman CHRIS MURPHY.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. Madam Chairman, I thank my friend for his great work on this issue.

I think it is important to address the concept presented by our friends on the other side of the aisle that the folks who are the recipients of these vouchers are victims. Well, they might be victims, but they are victims of an economy which says to far too many people out in this world that if you play by the rules, if you do everything we ask of you, if you go out and get a job, a full-time regular job, that you are still going to be living in poverty, that you are still going to need a little help to be able to survive in this world.

□ 2045

In a high-cost-of-living State and a high-cost-of-housing State like Connecticut, 5,000 vouchers does not do it for the working poor there. We have people in our neck of the woods that are paying 60, 70, 80 percent of their income, hard-earned income on rent.

We are a part of the world that desperately needs more section 8 housing vouchers to help the working poor, the people who are doing everything this society asks them to do. But because we live in an economy where wages are stagnant and the cost of living continues to rise, a program like this is a very valuable and needed helping hand.

Mr. AL GREEN of Texas. Madam Chair, may I inquire as to how much time is remaining?

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The gentleman from Texas has 1½ minutes remaining; the gentleman from Ohio also has 1½ minutes remaining.

Mr. AL GREEN of Texas. Madam Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CHABOT. Madam Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. AL GREEN of Texas. Madam Chair, I believe I would retain the right to speak last and continue to reserve.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Madam Chairman, I have a parliamentary inquiry.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The gentleman will state his parliamentary inquiry.

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. The gentleman is a member of the committee defending the committee's product. I believe he has the right to close; is that correct?

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The gentleman is correct. The gentleman from Texas has the right to close.

Mr. CHABOT. That being the case, Madam Chair, I give myself such time as I have remaining.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The gentleman is recognized for 1½ minutes.

Mr. CHABOT. Madam Chair, I would just like to reiterate the fact that I don't think we're doing either the children or the people that have become dependent on section 8 housing any favors by allowing, number one, the area that we covered in the last amendment, people to remain on section 8 housing indefinitely. I think that the time limit that's been proposed in the previous amendment is certainly a step in the right direction. The amendment that we have following this goes to a work requirement, which I think is also very reasonable in a program such as this.

I think encouraging people to remain dependent upon the government in the conditions that oftentimes we see in section 8 housing is doing no favor for those families, and that's why I think this is an appropriate amendment, and I urge my colleagues to support it.

Madam Chair, I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The gentleman from Texas is recognized for 1½ minutes.

Mr. AL GREEN of Texas. Madam Chair, it is beyond my comprehension to conclude that because people are working and in need of housing assistance, they should be evicted from the very assistance they are paying for because they don't make enough money to move to a better home.

I'm doing this not only for the people of my district, but I'm also doing this for the people in my colleague's district as well, because he has a deficit of 13,177 rental units for persons who are in need of this type of affordable housing.

This is not housing for those who don't need it and who are not qualified. The elderly need it. The persons who are with low-income and very low-income need it, and those who are disabled. And for edification purposes, when we talk about persons with extremely low income, we are talking about persons who make at or below 30 percent of the area median income. And many of these persons are using 50 percent of what they earn on housing.

So, Madam Chair, I am appreciative of what the gentleman has offered, but I'm going to ask persons to please vote against this amendment and vote for the disabled, vote for the elderly, vote so that persons with low income and extremely low income can have affordable housing.

Madam Chair, I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. CHABOT).

The question was taken; and the Acting Chairman announced that the noes appeared to have it.

Mr. CHABOT. Madam Chairman, I demand a recorded vote.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to clause 6 of rule XVIII, further proceedings on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Ohio will be postponed.

AMENDMENT NO. 6 OFFERED BY MR. HENSARLING

The Acting CHAIRMAN. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 6 printed in House Report 110–227.

Mr. HENSARLING. Madam Chairman, I offer an amendment.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Amendment No. 6 offered by Mr. HENSARLING:

Page 107, after line 9, insert the following new section:

SEC. 19. WORK REQUIREMENT FOR THOSE RECEIVING ASSISTANCE FOR 7 YEARS OR MORE.

Section 16 of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437n), as amended by the preceding provisions of this Act, is further amendment by adding at the end the following new subsection:

''(g) WORK REQUIREMENT FOR ASSISTED FAMILIES RECEIVING SECTION 8 ASSISTANCE FOR 7 YEARS OR MORE.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in this subsection and notwithstanding any other provision of this Act, assistance under section 8 may not be provided on behalf of any family who has previously been provided such assistance for 84 consecutive months or more, unless each member of the family who is 18 years of age or older performs not fewer than 20 hours of approved work activities (as such term is defined in section 407(d) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 607(d))).

''(2) EXEMPTION.—The Secretary of Housing and Urban Development shall provide an exemption from the applicability of paragraph (1) for any individual family member who—

''(A) is 62 years of age or older;

''(B) is a blind or disabled individual, as defined under section 216(i)(1) or 1614 of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 416(i)(1); 1382c), and who is unable to comply with this section, or is a primary caretaker of such individual;

''(C) is engaged in a work activity (as such term is defined in section 407(d) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 607(d)), as in effect on and after July 1, 1997));

''(D) meets the requirements for being exempted from having to engage in a work activity under the State program funded under part A of title IV of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 601 et seq.) or under any other welfare program of the State in which the public housing agency administering rental assistance described in subsection (a) is located, including a State-administered welfare-to-work program;

''(E) is in a family receiving assistance under a State program funded under part A of title IV of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 601 et seq.) or under any other welfare program of the State in which the public housing agency administering such rental assistance is located, including a State-administered welfare-to-work program, and has not been found by the State or other administering entity to be in noncompliance with such program; or

''(F) is a single custodial parent caring for a child who has not attained 6 years of age, and the individual proves that the individual has a demonstrated inability (as determined by the State) to obtain needed child care, for one or more of the following reasons:

''(i) Unavailability of appropriate child care within a reasonable distance from the individual's home or work site.

''(ii) Unavailability or unsuitability of informal child care by a relative or under other arrangements.

''(iii) Unavailability of appropriate and affordable formal child care arrangements.

''(3) ADMINISTRATION.—A public housing agency providing rental assistance described in paragraph (1) may administer the work activities requirement under this subsection directly, through a resident organization, or through a contractor having experience in administering work activities programs within the service area of the public housing agency. The Secretary may establish qualifications for such organizations and contractors.

''(4) PROSPECTIVE APPLICABILITY.—In determining the number of months for which an assisted family has been provided assistance under section 8, for purposes of paragraph (1), a public housing agency shall disregard any month that commenced before the date of the enactment of the Section 8 Voucher Reform Act of 2007.''.

Page 39, line 18, strike ''and''.

Page 39, after line 18, insert the following:

''(v) include an amount for the costs of administering the work activities requirement under section 16(g); and''.

Page 39, line 19, strike ''(v)'' and insert ''(vi)''.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to House Resolution 534, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. HENSARLING) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas.

Mr. HENSARLING. Madam Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise today to offer an amendment with my good friend, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. CHABOT), who just offered the previous amendment, and I certainly associate myself with his efforts on the previous amendment.

This amendment represents what many of us consider to be a very, very important principle, and that fundamental important principle is if you're an able-bodied adult under the age of 62 receiving means-tested Federal assistance, you ought to be on the road to self-sufficiency. That's what this amendment is all about, and that's what the principle is. This, we believe, will further encourage people to make the transition from dependency upon section 8 rental assistance to self-sufficiency. Not only is that important to them, it's important to the taxpayer who we're asking to pick up the tab. And this is, I believe, over a $2 billion bill.

Now, specifically, our amendment would require people receiving section 8 rental assistance for 7 consecutive years to perform a certain amount of work-related activities, which includes work, looking for work, job training, education and a host of other activities that are reflected in the TANF statute, which we mirror. There are a number of exemptions. It exempts those under age 18, over the age of 62, blind, disabled, those already working, already exempt under TANF, single parents of children under six who are unable to find appropriate child care.

Over 10 years ago, the Nation embarked on a bold new experiment with TANF, and we said that Federal assistance should be temporary and based on work and self-sufficiency and responsibility and personal dignity. That is a principle. Now many naysayers then said that it was mean. They said it was unworkable. Some even implied it was racist. Well, they were wrong then, and they are wrong now. Under TANF, the number of families receiving cash welfare steadily declined from a peak of 5.1 million families in March of 1994 to 1.9 million families. Child poverty has fallen dramatically. The employment of young single mothers has doubled, and the employment of mothers who have never been married is up by more than 50 percent.

Now, the lessons are clear. But we didn't finish the job 10 years ago, and we should finish it. Again, this is a vote on a very simple principle. If you're an able-bodied adult receiving means-tested Federal assistance, should you be on the road to self-sufficiency? I believe the answer is yes.

Madam Chair, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SCOTT of Georgia. Madam Chair, I rise in opposition to the amendment.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The gentleman is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SCOTT of Georgia. We have just heard the gentleman from Texas lay out a scenario that is ripe full of holes. This amendment is drastic. It is costly. It is inefficient. It affects all families and individuals currently using a voucher or living in section 8 project-based housing. It's impossible to administer. Even HUD and the administration itself has not even requested it. It imposes a new unfunded mandate on private sector landlords owning Federally assisted housing, forcing them to assume the role of a welfare agency.

The gentleman talks about a boom on the taxpayers. This imposes a significant cost to taxpayers by raising the costs incurred by public housing.

And I have in my hands a letter from just about every housing and real estate and housing association in this country saying, in effect, that we are not able to support the Hensarling amendment.

Most exemplary of the ridiculousness of this amendment is that he asks for 20 hours of work, but doesn't say how, doesn't say when. Twenty hours when? Twenty hours a week? Twenty hours a month? Twenty hours a year? There is no way to administer it.

But Madam Chair, what is so hurtful to me about this amendment; yes, it is mean-spirited. But not only is it mean-spirited, my friend, it is, indeed, bigoted. It is, yes, a bigoted amendment. Let me tell you why. It reflects a very

stereotypical negative view of certain economic racial groups of poor people, poor families, because it singles them out for an ill-defined work requirement that does not apply to other families and individuals receiving Federal assistance.

This amendment needs to be dealt with for what it really is, and quite honestly, it is an insult to the Congress of the United States. And I submit it is even beneath the dignity of the Congress of the United States to even entertain this amendment.

Madam Chair, I yield 1½ minutes to the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. CLEAVER), and I reserve the balance of my time to close.

Mr. CLEAVER. Madam Chair, I would ask to enter into a colloquy with the gentleman from Texas regarding his amendment on this bill. As probably the only person who lived in section 8, I may not be opposed to it; I would just like to get some questions, if I might.

If the gentleman would please help me on this. Are you proposing to amend section 8 or TANF?

Mr. HENSARLING. Section 8, if the gentleman will yield.

Mr. CLEAVER. Thank you. Because all of the information that your staff sent out contains information about TANF, and you just spoke quite extensively about TANF.

Mr. HENSARLING. Will the gentleman yield for an explanation?

Mr. CLEAVER. I can't yield because I don't have enough time. But most everything you've said was TANF.

The other two questions that I will ask very quickly is, if a person lives in public housing or section 8, does it mean that they're on welfare?

Mr. HENSARLING. I'm sorry. Would the gentleman repeat the question?

Mr. CLEAVER. If you are living in public housing or section 8, does it also mean that you are on welfare? And if so, which law will HUD enforce, the TANF regulation or the amended section 8 regulation which you propose?

Mr. HENSARLING. If the gentleman will yield?

Mr. SCOTT of Georgia. I will yield to the gentleman to respond.

Mr. HENSARLING. I thank the gentleman from Georgia.

This particular amendment mirrors the TANF statute, and so there may be confusion there.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The gentleman from Missouri's time has expired.

Mr. CLEAVER. Madam Chair, my questions weren't answered, but thank you.

Mr. SCOTT of Georgia. May I inquire as to the balance of my time?

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The gentleman from Georgia controls 1 minute.

Mr. SCOTT of Georgia. I reserve the right to close, if the gentleman from Texas has more to offer.

Mr. HENSARLING. Madam Chair, may I inquire how much time is left on my side?

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The gentleman controls 2 additional minutes.

Mr. HENSARLING. In that case, Madam Chair, I would like to yield 1½ minutes to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. CHABOT).

Mr. CHABOT. I thank the gentleman for yielding. And I thank the gentleman from Texas for his efforts to bring more accountability to the section 8 program. It's much needed and long overdue.

As welfare reform has shown us, the section 8 program should not become a way of life. It should be a helping hand, a way out of poverty. Ending the welfare cycle of dependency that has trapped so many has cut the welfare rolls in half, promoted individual responsibility and saved billions of tax dollars in the process.

One of the primary engines that continues to drive the civic welfare reform is the requirement that those in the program must work, and that's all that this amendment does. To be clear, the Hensarling-Chabot amendment would simply require all able-bodied individuals who have received section 8 for more than 7 consecutive years to work. I don't see anything at all mean-spirited about that. I certainly don't see anything bigoted about that to say that if somebody is receiving tax dollars, they ought to be required to work, to do something in consideration for the tax dollars that are being paid to help that person live while they need that assistance.

So the amendment, again, as the gentleman indicates, exempts those that are under 18 years of age, that are over 62 or blind or disabled, and those already exempt under TANF, and single parents of children under six. The amendment benefits the taxpayer and those in the section 8 program.

I would urge my colleagues to vote for this amendment. It requires work, and I think that's a good thing.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The gentleman from Texas still controls a half minute.

Mr. HENSARLING. I yield myself the balance of the time.

Again, I thank the gentleman from Ohio for coming down to support this important amendment.

I continue to fail to see what is mean-spirited about asking people, after 7 years, who get means-tested assistance, to be on the road to self-sufficiency, something good for them, something good for the taxpayer.

I must admit, I really regret, Madam Chairman, that the gentleman from Georgia chose to characterize this as ''bigoted.'' Perhaps I could have taken his words down. I sense when you run out of anything else to say, you characterize someone else's motivations and you use the term ''bigoted.'' And that, I regret.

□ 2100

Madam Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The gentleman from Georgia is recognized for 1 minute.

Mr. SCOTT of Georgia. Let me explain, if I may, Madam Chair, in closing. This is very personal to me. I've grown up in this country. I understand messages and I understand this message. This is a message that is targeted to a group of people, no matter how small they may be, who believe that certain people are categorized as wanting a handout, or that they are lazy, or that they don't want to work. So then the cry comes, before we can give them any help, make them work. Make them get a job.

Madam Chairman, that is what this is about. In my humble opinion, 20 hours of work, not even defined, whether it is a day, whether it is a month, whether it is a week, no requirements in it, is an unfunded mandate.

On top of that, Madam Chairman, there are already included in this bill a number of provisions to encourage work, to encourage self-sufficiency, including reduced work disincentives.

So in closing, may I say, Madam Chairman, please vote against the gentleman's amendment.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. HENSARLING).

The question was taken; and the Acting Chairman announced that the noes appeared to have it.

Mr. HENSARLING. Madam Chairman, I demand a recorded vote.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to clause 6 of rule XVIII, further proceedings on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Texas will be postponed.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE ACTING CHAIRMAN

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to clause 6 of rule XVIII, proceedings will now resume on those amendments on which further proceedings were postponed, in the following order:

Amendment No. 3 by Mr. GARY G. MILLER of California.

Amendment No. 5 by Mr. CHABOT of Ohio.

Amendment No. 6 by Mr. HENSARLING of Texas.

The Chair will reduce to 5 minutes the time for any electronic vote after the first vote in this series.

AMENDMENT NO. 3 OFFERED BY MR. GARY G. MILLER OF CALIFORNIA

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The unfinished business is the demand for a recorded vote on the amendment offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. GARY G. MILLER) on which further proceedings were postponed and on which the noes prevailed by voice vote.

The Clerk will redesignate the amendment.

The Clerk redesignated the amendment.

RECORDED VOTE

The Acting CHAIRMAN. A recorded vote has been demanded.

A recorded vote was ordered.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—ayes 151, noes 267, not voting 18, as follows:

[Roll No. 625]

AYES—151

Aderholt
Alexander
Bachmann
Bachus
Baker
Barrett (SC)
Bartlett (MD)
Barton (TX)
Biggert
Bilbray
Bilirakis
Bishop (UT)
Blackburn
Boehner
Bonner
Bono
Boozman
Boustany
Brady (TX)
Brown (SC)
Brown-Waite, Ginny
Buchanan
Burgess
Burton (IN)
Buyer
Calvert
Campbell (CA)
Cannon
Cantor
Capito
Carter
Chabot
Coble
Cole (OK)
Conaway
Crenshaw
Davis (KY)
Davis, David
Deal (GA)
Dent
Doolittle
Drake
Dreier
Duncan
Everett
Fallin
Feeney
Flake
Forbes
Fortenberry
Foxx
Franks (AZ)
Gallegly
Garrett (NJ)
Gillmor
Gingrey
Gohmert
Goode
Goodlatte
Granger
Graves
Hall (TX)
Hastings (WA)
Hayes
Heller
Hensarling
Herger
Hoekstra
Hulshof
Hunter
Inglis (SC)
Issa
Johnson (IL)
Johnson, Sam
Jones (NC)
Jordan
Keller
King (IA)
Kingston
Kirk
Kline (MN)
Knollenberg
Lamborn
Latham
Lewis (CA)
Lewis (KY)
Linder
Lucas
Lungren, Daniel E.
Mack
Manzullo
McCarthy (CA)
McCaul (TX)
McHenry
McKeon
McMorris Rodgers
Mica
Miller (FL)
Miller, Gary
Mitchell
Moran (KS)
Murphy, Patrick
Musgrave
Myrick
Neugebauer
Nunes
Pence
Peterson (MN)
Peterson (PA)
Petri
Pickering
Pitts
Poe
Price (GA)
Pryce (OH)
Putnam
Regula
Rehberg
Reynolds
Rogers (AL)
Rogers (KY)
Rohrabacher
Roskam
Royce
Ryan (WI)
Sali
Schmidt
Schwartz
Sensenbrenner
Sessions
Shadegg
Shuster
Simpson
Smith (NE)
Smith (TX)
Sullivan
Terry
Thornberry
Tiahrt
Tiberi
Walberg
Walsh (NY)
Wamp
Weldon (FL)
Weller
Westmoreland
Whitfield
Wicker
Wilson (SC)
Wolf
Young (FL)

NOES—267

Abercrombie
Ackerman
Akin
Allen
Altmire
Andrews
Arcuri
Baca
Baird
Baldwin
Barrow
Bean
Becerra
Berman
Berry
Bishop (GA)
Bishop (NY)
Blumenauer
Blunt
Bordallo
Boren
Boswell
Boucher
Boyd (FL)
Boyda (KS)
Brady (PA)
Braley (IA)
Brown, Corrine
Butterfield
Camp (MI)
Capps
Capuano
Cardoza
Carnahan
Carney
Carson
Castle
Castor
Chandler
Christensen
Clarke
Clay
Cleaver
Clyburn
Cohen
Cooper
Costa
Costello
Courtney
Cramer
Crowley
Cuellar
Cummings
Davis (AL)
Davis (CA)
Davis (IL)
Davis, Lincoln
Davis, Tom
DeFazio
DeGette
Delahunt
DeLauro
Diaz-Balart, L.
Diaz-Balart, M.
Dicks
Dingell
Doggett
Donnelly
Doyle
Edwards
Ehlers
Ellison
Ellsworth
Emanuel
Emerson
Engel
English (PA)
Eshoo
Etheridge
Farr
Fattah
Ferguson
Filner
Fortuño
Fossella
Frank (MA)
Frelinghuysen
Gerlach
Giffords
Gilchrest
Gillibrand
Gonzalez
Gordon
Green, Al
Green, Gene
Grijalva
Gutierrez
Hall (NY)
Hare
Harman
Hastings (FL)
Herseth Sandlin
Hill
Hinchey
Hinojosa
Hirono
Hobson
Hodes
Holden
Holt
Honda
Hooley
Hoyer
Inslee
Israel
Jackson (IL)
Jackson-Lee (TX)
Jefferson
Johnson (GA)
Johnson, E. B.
Jones (OH)
Kagen
Kanjorski
Kaptur
Kennedy
Kildee
Kilpatrick
Kind
King (NY)
Klein (FL)
Kucinich
Kuhl (NY)
LaHood
Lampson
Langevin
Lantos
Larsen (WA)
Larson (CT)
LaTourette
Lee
Levin
Lewis (GA)
Lipinski
LoBiondo
Loebsack
Lofgren, Zoe
Lowey
Lynch
Mahoney (FL)
Maloney (NY)
Marchant
Markey
Marshall
Matheson
Matsui
McCarthy (NY)
McCollum (MN)
McCotter
McDermott
McGovern
McHugh
McIntyre
McNerney
McNulty
Meek (FL)
Meeks (NY)
Melancon
Michaud
Miller (MI)
Miller (NC)
Mollohan
Moore (KS)
Moore (WI)
Moran (VA)
Murphy (CT)
Murphy, Tim
Murtha
Nadler
Napolitano
Neal (MA)
Norton
Oberstar
Obey
Olver
Ortiz
Pallone
Pascrell
Pastor
Payne
Pearce
Perlmutter
Platts
Pomeroy
Porter
Price (NC)
Rahall
Ramstad
Rangel
Reichert
Renzi
Reyes
Rodriguez
Rogers (MI)
Ros-Lehtinen
Ross
Rothman
Roybal-Allard
Ruppersberger
Rush
Ryan (OH)
Salazar
Sánchez, Linda T.
Sanchez, Loretta
Sarbanes
Saxton
Schakowsky
Schiff
Scott (GA)
Scott (VA)
Serrano
Sestak
Shays
Shea-Porter
Sherman
Shuler
Sires
Skelton
Smith (NJ)
Smith (WA)
Snyder
Solis
Souder
Space
Spratt
Stark
Stupak
Sutton
Tanner
Tauscher
Taylor
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Tierney
Towns
Turner
Udall (CO)
Udall (NM)
Upton
Van Hollen
Velázquez
Visclosky
Walden (OR)
Walz (MN)
Wasserman Schultz
Waters
Watson
Watt
Waxman
Weiner
Welch (VT)
Wexler
Wilson (NM)
Wilson (OH)
Woolsey
Wu
Wynn
Yarmuth

NOT VOTING—18

Berkley
Conyers
Cubin
Culberson
Davis, Jo Ann
Faleomavaega
Hastert
Higgins
Jindal
McCrery
Miller, George
Paul
Radanovich
Shimkus
Slaughter
Stearns
Tancredo
Young (AK)

□ 2127

Messrs. WATT of North Carolina, MEEK of Florida, CAMP of Michigan, ENGLISH of Pennsylvania, ROGERS of Michigan, HOYER, KUHL of New York and Mrs. MILLER of Michigan changed their vote from ''aye'' to ''no.''

Mrs. BONO changed her vote from ''no'' to ''aye.''

So the amendment was rejected.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

AMENDMENT NO. 5 OFFERED BY MR. CHABOT

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The unfinished business is the demand for a recorded vote on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. CHABOT) on which further proceedings were postponed and on which the noes prevailed by voice vote.

The Clerk will redesignate the amendment.

The Clerk redesignated the amendment.

RECORDED VOTE

The Acting CHAIRMAN. A recorded vote has been demanded.

A recorded vote was ordered.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. This will be a 5-minute vote.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—ayes 144, noes 277, not voting 15, as follows:

[Roll No. 626]

AYES—144

Aderholt
Akin
Bachmann
Barrett (SC)
Bartlett (MD)
Barton (TX)
Biggert
Bilbray
Bishop (UT)
Blackburn
Blunt
Boehner
Bonner
Bono
Boozman
Brady (TX)
Brown (SC)
Brown-Waite, Ginny
Buchanan
Buyer
Calvert
Camp (MI)
Campbell (CA)
Cannon
Cantor
Carter
Chabot
Coble
Cole (OK)
Conaway
Crenshaw
Culberson
Davis (KY)
Davis, David
Deal (GA)
Dent
Doolittle
Drake
Dreier
Duncan
Everett
Fallin
Feeney
Flake
Forbes
Fortenberry
Foxx
Franks (AZ)
Gallegly
Garrett (NJ)
Gingrey
Gohmert
Goode
Goodlatte
Granger
Graves
Hall (TX)
Hastings (WA)
Hayes
Heller
Hensarling
Herger
Hobson
Hoekstra
Hunter
Inglis (SC)
Issa
Johnson (IL)
Johnson, Sam
Jordan
Keller
King (IA)
Kingston
Kirk
Kline (MN)
Knollenberg
Lamborn
Latham
Lewis (CA)
Lewis (KY)
Linder
Lucas
Lungren, Daniel E.
Mack
Manzullo
Marchant
McCarthy (CA)
McCaul (TX)
McCotter
McHenry
McKeon
McMorris Rodgers
Mica
Miller (FL)
Miller (MI)
Miller, Gary
Murphy, Patrick
Musgrave
Myrick
Neugebauer
Nunes
Pearce
Pence
Peterson (MN)
Peterson (PA)
Petri
Pickering
Pitts
Poe
Price (GA)
Pryce (OH)
Putnam
Regula
Rehberg
Rogers (AL)
Rogers (KY)
Rogers (MI)
Rohrabacher
Roskam
Royce
Ryan (WI)
Sali
Schmidt
Schwartz
Sensenbrenner
Sessions
Shadegg
Shuster
Smith (NE)
Smith (TX)
Sullivan
Thornberry
Tiahrt
Tiberi
Upton
Walberg
Wamp
Weldon (FL)
Weller
Westmoreland
Wicker
Wilson (SC)
Wolf
Young (FL)

NOES—277

Abercrombie
Ackerman
Alexander
Allen
Altmire
Andrews
Arcuri
Baca
Bachus
Baird
Baker
Baldwin
Barrow
Bean
Becerra
Berman
Berry
Bilirakis
Bishop (GA)
Bishop (NY)
Blumenauer
Bordallo
Boren
Boswell
Boucher
Boustany
Boyd (FL)
Boyda (KS)
Brady (PA)
Braley (IA)
Brown, Corrine
Burgess
Butterfield
Capito
Capps
Capuano
Cardoza
Carnahan
Carney
Carson
Castle
Castor
Chandler
Christensen
Clarke
Clay
Cleaver
Clyburn
Cohen
Cooper
Costa
Costello
Courtney
Cramer
Crowley
Cuellar
Cummings
Davis (AL)
Davis (CA)
Davis (IL)
Davis, Lincoln
Davis, Tom
DeFazio
DeGette
Delahunt
DeLauro
Diaz-Balart, L.
Diaz-Balart, M.
Dicks
Dingell
Doggett
Donnelly
Doyle
Edwards
Ehlers
Ellison
Ellsworth
Emanuel
Emerson
Engel
English (PA)
Eshoo
Etheridge
Farr
Fattah
Ferguson
Filner
Fortuño
Fossella
Frank (MA)
Frelinghuysen
Gerlach
Giffords
Gilchrest
Gillibrand
Gillmor
Gonzalez
Gordon
Green, Al
Green, Gene
Grijalva
Gutierrez
Hall (NY)
Hare
Harman
Hastings (FL)
Herseth Sandlin
Higgins
Hill
Hinchey
Hinojosa
Hirono
Hodes
Holden
Holt
Honda
Hooley
Hoyer
Hulshof
Inslee
Israel
Jackson (IL)
Jackson-Lee (TX)
Jefferson
Johnson (GA)
Johnson, E. B.
Jones (NC)
Jones (OH)
Kagen
Kanjorski
Kaptur
Kennedy
Kildee
Kilpatrick

Kind
King (NY)
Klein (FL)
Kucinich
Kuhl (NY)
LaHood
Lampson
Langevin
Lantos
Larsen (WA)
Larson (CT)
LaTourette
Lee
Levin
Lewis (GA)
Lipinski
LoBiondo
Loebsack
Lofgren, Zoe
Lowey
Lynch
Mahoney (FL)
Maloney (NY)
Markey
Marshall
Matheson
Matsui
McCarthy (NY)
McCollum (MN)
McDermott
McGovern
McHugh
McIntyre
McNerney
McNulty
Meek (FL)
Meeks (NY)
Melancon
Michaud
Miller (NC)
Miller, George
Mitchell
Mollohan
Moore (KS)
Moore (WI)
Moran (KS)
Moran (VA)
Murphy (CT)
Murphy, Tim
Murtha
Nadler
Napolitano
Neal (MA)
Norton
Oberstar
Obey
Olver
Ortiz
Pallone
Pascrell
Pastor
Payne
Perlmutter
Platts
Pomeroy
Porter
Price (NC)
Rahall
Ramstad
Rangel
Reichert
Renzi
Reyes
Reynolds
Rodriguez
Ros-Lehtinen
Ross
Rothman
Roybal-Allard
Ruppersberger
Rush
Ryan (OH)
Salazar
Sánchez, Linda T.
Sanchez, Loretta
Sarbanes
Saxton
Schakowsky
Schiff
Scott (GA)
Scott (VA)
Serrano
Sestak
Shays
Shea-Porter
Sherman
Shimkus
Shuler
Simpson
Sires
Skelton
Smith (NJ)
Smith (WA)
Snyder
Solis
Souder
Space
Spratt
Stark
Stupak
Sutton
Tanner
Tauscher
Taylor
Terry
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Tierney
Towns
Turner
Udall (CO)
Udall (NM)
Van Hollen
Velázquez
Visclosky
Walden (OR)
Walsh (NY)
Walz (MN)
Wasserman Schultz
Waters
Watson
Watt
Waxman
Weiner
Welch (VT)
Wexler
Whitfield
Wilson (NM)
Wilson (OH)
Woolsey
Wu
Wynn
Yarmuth

NOT VOTING—15

Berkley
Burton (IN)
Conyers
Cubin
Davis, Jo Ann
Faleomavaega
Hastert
Jindal
McCrery
Paul
Radanovich
Slaughter
Stearns
Tancredo
Young (AK)

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE ACTING CHAIRMAN

The Acting CHAIRMAN (during the vote). Members are advised there are 2 minutes remaining in this vote.

□ 2135

So the amendment was rejected.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

AMENDMENT NO. 6 OFFERED BY MR. HENSARLING

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The unfinished business is the demand for a recorded vote on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. HENSARLING) on which further proceedings were postponed and on which the noes prevailed by voice vote.

The Clerk will redesignate the amendment.

The Clerk redesignated the amendment.

RECORDED VOTE

The Acting CHAIRMAN. A recorded vote has been demanded.

A recorded vote was ordered.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. This will be a 5-minute vote.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—ayes 197, noes 222, not voting 17, as follows:

[Roll No. 627]

AYES—197

Aderholt
Akin
Alexander
Bachmann
Bachus
Baker
Barrett (SC)
Barrow
Bartlett (MD)
Barton (TX)
Bilbray
Bilirakis
Bishop (UT)
Blackburn
Blunt
Boehner
Bonner
Bono
Boozman
Boustany
Boyd (FL)
Boyda (KS)
Brady (TX)
Brown (SC)
Brown-Waite, Ginny
Buchanan
Burgess
Burton (IN)
Buyer
Calvert
Camp (MI)
Campbell (CA)
Cannon
Cantor
Capito
Carter
Castle
Chabot
Coble
Cole (OK)
Conaway
Crenshaw
Culberson
Davis (KY)
Davis, David
Davis, Tom
Deal (GA)
Dent
Diaz-Balart, L.
Diaz-Balart, M.
Doolittle
Drake
Dreier
Duncan
Ehlers
Emerson
English (PA)
Everett
Fallin
Feeney
Ferguson
Flake
Forbes
Fortenberry
Fortuño
Fossella
Foxx
Franks (AZ)
Frelinghuysen
Gallegly
Garrett (NJ)
Gerlach
Gillmor
Gingrey
Gohmert
Goode
Goodlatte
Granger
Graves
Hall (TX)
Hastings (WA)
Hayes
Heller
Hensarling
Herger
Hill
Hobson
Hoekstra
Hulshof
Hunter
Inglis (SC)
Issa
Johnson (IL)
Johnson, Sam
Jones (NC)
Jordan
Keller
King (IA)
King (NY)
Kingston
Kirk
Kline (MN)
Knollenberg
Kuhl (NY)
LaHood
Lamborn
Latham
Lewis (CA)
Lewis (KY)
Linder
Lipinski
LoBiondo
Lucas
Lungren, Daniel E.
Mack
Manzullo
Marchant
Marshall
McCarthy (CA)
McCaul (TX)
McCotter
McHenry
McHugh
McKeon
McMorris Rodgers
McNerney
Melancon
Mica
Miller (FL)
Miller (MI)
Miller, Gary
Moran (KS)
Murphy, Patrick
Murphy, Tim
Musgrave
Myrick
Neugebauer
Nunes
Pearce
Pence
Peterson (MN)
Peterson (PA)
Petri
Pickering
Pitts
Platts
Poe
Porter
Price (GA)
Putnam
Ramstad
Rehberg
Reichert
Renzi
Reynolds
Rogers (AL)
Rogers (KY)
Rogers (MI)
Ros-Lehtinen
Roskam
Royce
Ryan (WI)
Sali
Saxton
Schmidt
Schwartz
Sensenbrenner
Sessions
Shadegg
Shays
Shuster
Simpson
Smith (NE)
Smith (NJ)
Smith (TX)
Souder
Sullivan
Tanner
Taylor
Terry
Thornberry
Tiahrt
Tiberi
Turner
Upton
Walberg
Walden (OR)
Walsh (NY)
Wamp
Weldon (FL)
Weller
Westmoreland
Whitfield
Wicker
Wilson (SC)
Wolf
Young (FL)

NOES—222

Abercrombie
Ackerman
Allen
Altmire
Andrews
Arcuri
Baca
Baird
Baldwin
Bean
Becerra
Berman
Berry
Biggert
Bishop (GA)
Bishop (NY)
Blumenauer
Bordallo
Boren
Boswell
Boucher
Brady (PA)
Braley (IA)
Brown, Corrine
Butterfield
Capps
Capuano
Cardoza
Carnahan
Carney
Carson
Castor
Chandler
Christensen
Clarke
Clay
Cleaver
Clyburn
Cohen
Cooper
Costa
Costello
Courtney
Cramer
Crowley
Cuellar
Cummings
Davis (AL)
Davis (CA)
Davis (IL)
Davis, Lincoln
DeFazio
DeGette
Delahunt
DeLauro
Dicks
Dingell
Doggett
Donnelly
Doyle
Edwards
Ellison
Ellsworth
Emanuel
Engel
Eshoo
Etheridge
Farr
Fattah
Filner
Frank (MA)
Giffords
Gilchrest
Gillibrand
Gonzalez
Gordon
Green, Al
Green, Gene
Grijalva
Gutierrez
Hall (NY)
Hare
Harman
Hastings (FL)
Herseth Sandlin
Higgins
Hinchey
Hinojosa
Hirono
Hodes
Holden
Holt
Honda
Hooley
Hoyer
Inslee
Israel
Jackson (IL)
Jackson-Lee (TX)
Jefferson
Johnson (GA)
Johnson, E. B.
Jones (OH)
Kagen
Kanjorski
Kaptur
Kennedy
Kildee
Kilpatrick
Kind
Klein (FL)
Kucinich
Lampson
Langevin
Lantos
Larsen (WA)
Larson (CT)
LaTourette
Lee
Levin
Lewis (GA)
Loebsack
Lofgren, Zoe
Lowey
Lynch
Mahoney (FL)
Maloney (NY)
Markey
Matheson
Matsui
McCarthy (NY)
McCollum (MN)
McDermott
McGovern
McIntyre
McNulty
Meek (FL)
Meeks (NY)
Michaud
Miller (NC)
Miller, George
Mitchell
Mollohan
Moore (KS)
Moore (WI)
Moran (VA)
Murphy (CT)
Murtha
Nadler
Napolitano
Neal (MA)
Norton
Oberstar
Obey
Olver
Ortiz
Pallone
Pascrell
Pastor
Payne
Perlmutter
Pomeroy
Price (NC)
Rahall
Rangel
Regula
Reyes
Rodriguez
Ross
Rothman
Roybal-Allard
Ruppersberger
Rush
Ryan (OH)
Salazar
Sánchez, Linda T.
Sanchez, Loretta
Sarbanes
Schakowsky
Schiff
Scott (GA)
Scott (VA)
Serrano
Sestak
Shea-Porter
Sherman
Shimkus
Shuler
Sires
Skelton
Smith (WA)
Snyder
Solis
Space
Spratt
Stark
Stupak
Sutton
Tauscher
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Tierney
Towns
Udall (CO)
Udall (NM)
Van Hollen
Velázquez
Visclosky
Walz (MN)
Wasserman Schultz
Waters
Watson
Watt
Waxman
Weiner
Welch (VT)
Wexler
Wilson (NM)
Wilson (OH)
Woolsey
Wynn
Yarmuth

NOT VOTING—17

Berkley
Conyers
Cubin
Davis, Jo Ann
Faleomavaega
Hastert
Jindal
McCrery
Paul
Pryce (OH)
Radanovich
Rohrabacher
Slaughter
Stearns
Tancredo
Wu
Young (AK)

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE ACTING CHAIRMAN

The Acting CHAIRMAN (during the vote). Members are advised they have 2 minutes remaining to record their votes.

□ 2142

So the amendment was rejected.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Chairman, on rollcall Nos. 625, 626, and 627 I was unavoidably detained. Had I been present, I would have voted "aye."

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The question is on the committee amendment in the nature of a substitute, as amended.

The committee amendment in the nature of a substitute, as amended, was agreed to.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Under the rule, the Committee rises.

Accordingly, the Committee rose; and the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. MCNULTY) having assumed the chair, Ms. BALDWIN, Acting Chairman of the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union, reported that that Committee, having had under consideration the bill (H.R. 1851) to reform the housing choice voucher program under

section 8 of the United States Housing Act of 1937, pursuant to House Resolution 534, she reported the bill back to the House with an amendment adopted by the Committee of the Whole.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the rule, the previous question is ordered.

Is a separate vote demanded on any amendment to the amendment reported from the Committee of the Whole? If not, the question is on the amendment.

The amendment was agreed to.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the engrossment and third reading of the bill.

The bill was ordered to be engrossed and read a third time, and was read the third time.

MOTION TO RECOMMIT OFFERED BY MRS. CAPITO

Mrs. CAPITO. Mr. Speaker, I offer a motion to recommit.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is the gentlewoman opposed to the bill?

Mrs. CAPITO. I am, Mr. Speaker, in its present form.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Clerk will report the motion to recommit.

The Clerk read as follows:

Mrs. Capito moves to recommit the bill H.R. 1851 to the Committee on Financial Services with instructions that the Committee report the same back forthwith with the following amendment:

Page 107, after line 9, insert the following new section:

SEC. 19. ACCEPTABLE IDENTIFICATION REQUIREMENT.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Rental housing assistance under section 8(o) of the United States Housing Act of 1937 may not be provided on behalf of any individual or household unless the individual provides, or, in the case of a household, all adult members of the household provide, valid personal identification in one of the following forms:

(1) SOCIAL SECURITY CARD WITH PHOTO IDENTIFICATION CARD OR REAL ID ACT IDENTIFICATION.—

(A) A social security card accompanied by a photo identification card issued by the Federal Government or a State Government; or

(B) A driver's license or identification card issued by a State in the case of a State that is in compliance with title II of the REAL ID Act of 2005 (title II of division B of Public Law 109–13; 49 U.S.C. 30301 note).

(2) PASSPORT.—A passport issued by the United States or a foreign government.

(3) USCIS PHOTO IDENTIFICATION CARD.—A photo identification card issued by the Secretary of Homeland Security (acting through the Director of the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services).

(b) REGULATIONS.—The Secretary of Housing and Urban Development shall, by regulation, require that each public housing agency or other entity administering rental housing assistance described in subsection (a) take such actions as the Secretary considers necessary to ensure compliance with the requirements of subsection (a).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentlewoman from West Virginia is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. CAPITO. Mr. Speaker, the intent of this motion to recommit is clear.

Upon adoption of this motion to recommit, we will go right to the adoption of the bill in its entirety to include the important language that ensures illegal immigrants are not benefitting from rental assistance provided by the section 8 program that is funded by the dollars of hard-working Americans.

The section 8 program has provided much needed rental assistance to low-income families who spend a high percentage of their income on housing costs since its creation in the 1970s. Today, there are approximately 2 million vouchers administered by the more than 2,500 public housing authorities in this country. The success of this program is now dominating HUD's budget, but we are looking for clear reform to ensure the viability of this program.

This motion to recommit helps strengthen the section 8 program by ensuring that illegal immigrants cannot receive assistance from this program. This measure will simply require all occupants of a housing unit, supported by section 8, to establish proof of their legal residency through the use of secure forms of identification.

There are four options here: driver's license or REAL ID card; a foreign or U.S. passport; a citizens and immigration services photo ID card; or a Social Security card in conjunction with the State or Federal photo ID. Without this addition to this bill, illegal immigrants could utilize current loopholes to secure section 8 housing benefits.

We absolutely cannot reward this illegal behavior with incentives for illegal immigrants to remain in the country in blatant violation of the law. By providing housing, we are simply encouraging the continuation of their illegal presence in our Nation. This is a form of back-door amnesty.

There have been many stories across the country highlighting examples of benefits being granted to illegal immigrants. I believe, in 2006, in Denver, Colorado alone, there were an estimated 20,000 illegal immigrants holding FHA ensured loans. Each of these cases provides further incentives for illegal immigrants to remain in our Nation violating the law.

Our Nation's immigration system is clearly broken. We must take this opportunity to strengthen a successful Federal program to ensure this benefit is only provided to legal residents.

The American people work too hard for their tax dollars to have them spent on illegal immigrants. I urge a ''yes'' vote on this motion to recommit.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to the motion to recommit.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Massachusetts is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, this bill has two parts.

One part is to reiterate what is already the law. It is already the law that only people who are in the country legally may benefit from this. The second part is how to enforce it, and what it does is to continue an unfortunate tendency that goes counter to everything we have tried to do about privacy, of making the Social Security card a universal identifier, and there are real dangers in that.

Members who have been concerned with privacy know that an unreasonable and unrestricted use of the Social Security card is a problem. Indeed, we have talked about legislation, bipartisan, to restrict the requirement that you give your Social Security number. But here is what this bill says. It does not change the law. It's already illegal for people who are not here legally to get these benefits.

The gentleman mentioned 26,000 FHA loans in Colorado, zero section 8s. I haven't heard the evidence. I would be glad to listen to it. I will invite people, if there is evidence that this is a problem with section 8, let's listen to it. But here's what you impose on the housing authorities. There is now a requirement that people show that they are here legally. But now in this legislation, if it's adopted, would narrow that.

So here is what you would have to take to get someone who wanted to get into section 8:

They could show you their passport. The number of really poor people carrying passports is less than you might imagine. Although, I don't know what they might imagine, so I take that back.

Or a USCIS photo identification card. Well, if you are a citizen born in the United States, you don't have one.

Or a driver's license. You may not have a driver's license.

So if you are an 82 year-old who doesn't travel a lot to foreign countries and you are an American citizen, what are you going to show them? Your Social Security card. What this does is put more legal emphasis behind that.

I would say to Members, Members can vote as they wish. But the next time people complain to you about privacy problems and about Social Security numbers floating around being misused, if you voted for this, say, yes, I helped, because that's what this does.

The only thing this adds to American law is a requirement that most people trying to get section 8s will have to show their Social Security card, because a lot of them won't have driver's licenses, and they won't have passports. If they are American citizens, they won't have that card. The most common form of identification required will be the Social Security card.

I have been working, the people in the Energy and Commerce Committee, the people in the Ways and Means Committee, we have all been working to restrict the idea that the Social Security card is an ID card. I thought that was fairly generally accepted, that we don't want the Social Security card to be the ID card.

What's the Federal Government saying here? Because, yes, you can say,

well, who wants to steal the identification of a poor person? You know, being up against a section 8, no big deal. But once the Federal Government, the minority has been consistently arguing, once we have stated the Social Security card is the most universally accepted, the Social Security card is considered to be the best form of identification, then what's the argument against every business in America doing it? How do you stop this from becoming that universal identifier?

Members can cover themselves by voting for something that's already in the law. It's time to cover yourself anyway; it's kind of late.

But understand what Members will be doing. They will be furthering the practice of using the Social Security card as an identifier. They will be weakening our efforts to undercut.

Members may be unhappy to understand the implications of what they are doing. But I do not think it is wise for this House to continue a pattern of saying that the Social Security card will not just be a means of checking for Social Security but will become the universal identifier, that people will have to show it. Because if we, the Federal Government, say you have to show it, then how do you tell the hotel that they can't say it? How do you tell anybody else that they can't require the production of Social Security cards?

The logical consequence of this will be a serious impediment to our efforts to protect privacy and to deal with identity theft. The unrestricted use of the Social Security card is a serious problem there, and this makes it worse.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman's time has expired.

Without objection, the previous question is ordered on motion to recommit.

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion to recommit.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the noes appeared to have it.

RECORDED VOTE

Mrs. CAPITO. Mr. Speaker, I demand a recorded vote.

A recorded vote was ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 9 of rule XX, the Chair will reduce to 5 minutes the minimum time for any electronic vote on the question of passage.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—ayes 233, noes 186, not voting 12, as follows:

[Roll No. 628]

AYES—233

Aderholt
Akin
Alexander
Altmire
Bachmann
Bachus
Baker
Barrett (SC)
Barrow
Bartlett (MD)
Barton (TX)
Bean
Biggert
Bilbray
Bilirakis
Bishop (UT)
Blackburn
Blunt
Boehner
Bonner
Bono
Boozman
Boren
Boswell
Boustany
Boyd (FL)
Boyda (KS)
Brady (TX)
Brown (SC)
Brown-Waite, Ginny
Buchanan
Burgess
Burton (IN)
Buyer
Calvert
Camp (MI)
Campbell (CA)
Cannon
Cantor
Capito
Carney
Carter
Castle
Chabot
Chandler
Coble
Cole (OK)
Conaway
Cramer
Crenshaw
Culberson
Davis (KY)
Davis, David
Davis, Lincoln
Davis, Tom
Deal (GA)
Dent
Donnelly
Doolittle
Drake
Dreier
Duncan
Ehlers
Ellsworth
Emerson
English (PA)
Everett
Fallin
Feeney
Ferguson
Flake
Forbes
Fortenberry
Fossella
Foxx
Franks (AZ)
Frelinghuysen
Gallegly
Garrett (NJ)
Gerlach
Giffords
Gilchrest
Gillibrand
Gillmor
Gingrey
Gohmert
Goode
Goodlatte
Gordon
Granger
Graves
Hall (NY)
Hall (TX)
Harman
Hastings (WA)
Hayes
Heller
Hensarling
Herger
Herseth Sandlin
Hill
Hobson
Hodes
Hoekstra
Holden
Hulshof
Hunter
Inglis (SC)
Issa
Johnson (IL)
Johnson, Sam
Jones (NC)
Jordan
Kanjorski
Keller
King (IA)
King (NY)
Kingston
Kirk
Klein (FL)
Kline (MN)
Knollenberg
Kuhl (NY)
LaHood
Lamborn
Lampson
Latham
LaTourette
Lewis (CA)
Lewis (KY)
Linder
Lipinski
LoBiondo
Lucas
Lungren, Daniel E.
Mack
Mahoney (FL)
Manzullo
Marchant
Marshall
Matheson
McCarthy (CA)
McCaul (TX)
McCotter
McHenry
McHugh
McIntyre
McKeon
McMorris Rodgers
McNerney
Melancon
Mica
Miller (FL)
Miller (MI)
Miller, Gary
Mitchell
Moore (KS)
Moran (KS)
Murphy, Patrick
Murphy, Tim
Musgrave
Myrick
Neugebauer
Nunes
Pearce
Pence
Perlmutter
Peterson (MN)
Peterson (PA)
Petri
Pickering
Pitts
Platts
Poe
Porter
Price (GA)
Pryce (OH)
Putnam
Ramstad
Regula
Rehberg
Reichert
Renzi
Reynolds
Rogers (AL)
Rogers (KY)
Rogers (MI)
Rohrabacher
Roskam
Ross
Royce
Ryan (WI)
Saxton
Schmidt
Sensenbrenner
Sessions
Shadegg
Shays
Shimkus
Shuler
Shuster
Simpson
Skelton
Smith (NE)
Smith (NJ)
Smith (TX)
Souder
Space
Stearns
Sullivan
Tanner
Taylor
Terry
Thornberry
Tiahrt
Tiberi
Turner
Udall (CO)
Upton
Walberg
Walden (OR)
Walsh (NY)
Wamp
Weldon (FL)
Weller
Westmoreland
Whitfield
Wicker
Wilson (NM)
Wilson (OH)
Wilson (SC)
Wolf
Young (FL)

NOES—186

Abercrombie
Ackerman
Allen
Andrews
Arcuri
Baca
Baird
Baldwin
Becerra
Berman
Berry
Bishop (GA)
Bishop (NY)
Blumenauer
Boucher
Brady (PA)
Braley (IA)
Brown, Corrine
Butterfield
Capps
Capuano
Cardoza
Carnahan
Carson
Castor
Clarke
Clay
Cleaver
Clyburn
Cohen
Cooper
Costa
Costello
Courtney
Crowley
Cuellar
Cummings
Davis (AL)
Davis (CA)
Davis (IL)
DeFazio
DeGette
Delahunt
DeLauro
Diaz-Balart, L.
Diaz-Balart, M.
Dicks
Dingell
Doggett
Doyle
Edwards
Ellison
Emanuel
Engel
Eshoo
Etheridge
Farr
Fattah
Filner
Frank (MA)
Gonzalez
Green, Al
Green, Gene
Grijalva
Gutierrez
Hare
Hastings (FL)
Higgins
Hinchey
Hinojosa
Hirono
Holt
Honda
Hooley
Hoyer
Inslee
Israel
Jackson (IL)
Jackson-Lee (TX)
Jefferson
Johnson (GA)
Johnson, E. B.
Jones (OH)
Kagen
Kaptur
Kennedy
Kildee
Kilpatrick
Kind
Kucinich
Langevin
Lantos
Larsen (WA)
Larson (CT)
Lee
Levin
Lewis (GA)
Loebsack
Lofgren, Zoe
Lowey
Lynch
Maloney (NY)
Markey
Matsui
McCarthy (NY)
McCollum (MN)
McDermott
McGovern
McNulty
Meek (FL)
Meeks (NY)
Michaud
Miller (NC)
Miller, George
Mollohan
Moore (WI)
Moran (VA)
Murphy (CT)
Murtha
Nadler
Napolitano
Neal (MA)
Oberstar
Obey
Olver
Ortiz
Pallone
Pascrell
Pastor
Payne
Pomeroy
Price (NC)
Rahall
Rangel
Reyes
Rodriguez
Ros-Lehtinen
Rothman
Roybal-Allard
Ruppersberger
Rush
Ryan (OH)
Salazar
Sali
Sánchez, Linda T.
Sanchez, Loretta
Sarbanes
Schakowsky
Schiff
Schwartz
Scott (GA)
Scott (VA)
Serrano
Sestak
Shea-Porter
Sherman
Sires
Smith (WA)
Snyder
Solis
Spratt
Stark
Stupak
Sutton
Tauscher
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Tierney
Towns
Udall (NM)
Van Hollen
Velázquez
Visclosky
Walz (MN)
Wasserman Schultz
Waters
Watson
Watt
Waxman
Weiner
Welch (VT)
Wexler
Woolsey
Wu
Wynn
Yarmuth

NOT VOTING—12

Berkley
Conyers
Cubin
Davis, Jo Ann
Hastert
Jindal
McCrery
Paul
Radanovich
Slaughter
Tancredo
Young (AK)

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (during the vote). Members are advised that less than 2 minutes remain in the vote.

□ 2212

Mr. UDALL of Colorado, Mr. WILSON of Ohio, Mr. LINCOLN DAVIS of Tennessee, Mr. HOLDEN, and Mr. MOORE of Kansas changed their vote from ''no'' to ''aye.''

So the motion to recommit was agreed to.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to the instructions of the House on the motion to recommit, I report H.R. 1851 back to the House with an amendment.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Clerk will report the amendment.

The Clerk read as follows:

Amendment:

Page 107, after line 9, insert the following new section:

SEC. 19. ACCEPTABLE IDENTIFICATION REQUIREMENT.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Rental housing assistance under section 8(o) of the United States Housing Act of 1937 may not be provided on behalf of any individual or household unless the individual provides, or, in the case of a household, all adult members of the household provide, valid personal identification in one of the following forms:

(1) SOCIAL SECURITY CARD WITH PHOTO IDENTIFICATION CARD OR REAL ID ACT IDENTIFICATION.—

(A) A social security card accompanied by a photo identification card issued by the Federal Government or a State Government; or

(B) A driver's license or identification card issued by a State in the case of a State that is in compliance with title II of the REAL ID Act of 2005 (title II of division B of Public Law 109–13; 49 U.S.C. 30301 note).

(2) PASSPORT.—A passport issued by the United States or a foreign government.

(3) USCIS PHOTO IDENTIFICATION CARD.—A photo identification card issued by the Secretary of Homeland Security (acting through the Director of the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services).

(b) REGULATIONS.—The Secretary of Housing and Urban Development shall, by regulation, require that each public housing agency or other entity administering rental housing assistance described in subsection (a) take such actions as the Secretary considers necessary to ensure compliance with the requirements of subsection (a).

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts (during the reading). Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the amendment be considered as read and printed in the RECORD.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Massachusetts?

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the amendment.

The amendment was agreed to.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the engrossment and third reading of the bill.

The bill was ordered to be engrossed and read a third time, and was read the third time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the passage of the bill.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. This will be a 5-minute vote.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 333, nays 83, not voting 15, as follows:

[Roll No. 629]

YEAS—333

Abercrombie
Ackerman
Aderholt
Alexander
Allen
Altmire
Andrews
Arcuri
Baca
Bachmann
Bachus
Baird
Baker
Baldwin
Barrow
Barton (TX)
Bean
Becerra
Berman
Berry
Biggert
Bilbray
Bilirakis
Bishop (GA)
Bishop (NY)
Bishop (UT)
Blumenauer
Bonner
Boozman
Boren
Boswell
Boucher
Boustany
Boyd (FL)
Boyda (KS)
Brady (PA)
Braley (IA)
Brown (SC)
Brown, Corrine
Brown-Waite, Ginny
Buchanan
Burgess
Butterfield
Camp (MI)
Capito
Capps
Capuano
Cardoza
Carnahan
Carney
Carson
Castle
Castor
Chandler
Clarke
Clay
Cleaver
Clyburn
Cohen
Cole (OK)
Cooper
Costa
Costello
Courtney
Cramer
Crenshaw
Crowley
Cuellar
Cummings
Davis (AL)
Davis (CA)
Davis (IL)
Davis (KY)
Davis, Lincoln
Davis, Tom
DeFazio
DeGette
Delahunt
DeLauro
Dent
Diaz-Balart, L.
Diaz-Balart, M.
Dicks
Dingell
Doggett
Donnelly
Doyle
Drake
Edwards
Ehlers
Ellison
Ellsworth
Emanuel
Emerson
Engel
English (PA)
Eshoo
Etheridge
Everett
Fallin
Farr
Fattah
Ferguson
Filner
Forbes
Fortenberry
Fossella
Frank (MA)
Frelinghuysen
Gerlach
Giffords
Gilchrest
Gillibrand
Gillmor
Gonzalez
Gordon
Granger
Green, Al
Green, Gene
Grijalva
Gutierrez
Hall (NY)
Hall (TX)
Hare
Harman
Hastings (FL)
Hayes
Heller
Herseth Sandlin
Higgins
Hill
Hinchey
Hinojosa
Hirono
Hobson
Hodes
Holden
Holt
Honda
Hoyer
Hulshof
Hunter
Inslee
Israel
Jackson (IL)
Jackson-Lee (TX)
Jefferson
Johnson (GA)
Johnson, E. B.
Jones (NC)
Jones (OH)
Kagen
Kanjorski
Kaptur
Kennedy
Kildee
Kilpatrick
Kind
King (NY)
Kirk
Klein (FL)
Knollenberg
Kucinich
Kuhl (NY)
LaHood
Lampson
Langevin
Lantos
Larsen (WA)
Larson (CT)
Latham
LaTourette
Lee
Levin
Lewis (GA)
Lewis (KY)
Lipinski
LoBiondo
Loebsack
Lofgren, Zoe
Lowey
Lucas
Lungren, Daniel E.
Lynch
Mahoney (FL)
Maloney (NY)
Marchant
Markey
Marshall
Matheson
Matsui
McCarthy (CA)
McCarthy (NY)
McCaul (TX)
McCollum (MN)
McCotter
McDermott
McGovern
McHugh
McIntyre
McMorris Rodgers
McNerney
McNulty
Meek (FL)
Meeks (NY)
Melancon
Michaud
Miller (MI)
Miller (NC)
Miller, Gary
Miller, George
Mitchell
Mollohan
Moore (KS)
Moore (WI)
Moran (KS)
Moran (VA)
Murphy (CT)
Murphy, Tim
Murtha
Myrick
Nadler
Napolitano
Neal (MA)
Nunes
Oberstar
Obey
Olver
Ortiz
Pallone
Pascrell
Pastor
Payne
Pearce
Perlmutter
Peterson (MN)
Peterson (PA)
Pickering
Platts
Pomeroy
Porter
Price (NC)
Pryce (OH)
Rahall
Ramstad
Rangel
Regula
Rehberg
Reichert
Renzi
Reyes
Reynolds
Rodriguez
Rogers (AL)
Rogers (KY)
Rogers (MI)
Ros-Lehtinen
Roskam
Ross
Rothman
Roybal-Allard
Ruppersberger
Rush
Ryan (OH)
Salazar
Sanchez, Loretta
Sarbanes
Saxton
Schakowsky
Schiff
Schmidt
Scott (GA)
Scott (VA)
Serrano
Sestak
Shays
Shea-Porter
Sherman
Shimkus
Shuler
Simpson
Sires
Skelton
Smith (NE)
Smith (NJ)
Smith (TX)
Smith (WA)
Snyder
Solis
Souder
Space
Spratt
Stark
Stupak
Sutton
Tanner
Tauscher
Taylor
Terry
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Tiahrt
Tiberi
Tierney
Towns
Turner
Udall (CO)
Udall (NM)
Upton
Van Hollen
Velázquez
Visclosky
Walden (OR)
Walsh (NY)
Walz (MN)
Wasserman Schultz
Waters
Watson
Watt
Waxman
Weiner
Welch (VT)
Weller
Wexler
Whitfield
Wilson (NM)
Wilson (OH)
Wolf
Woolsey
Wu
Wynn
Yarmuth
Young (FL)

NAYS—83

Akin
Barrett (SC)
Bartlett (MD)
Blackburn
Blunt
Boehner
Bono
Brady (TX)
Burton (IN)
Buyer
Calvert
Campbell (CA)
Cannon
Cantor
Carter
Chabot
Coble
Conaway
Culberson
Davis, David
Deal (GA)
Doolittle
Dreier
Duncan
Feeney
Flake
Foxx
Franks (AZ)
Gallegly
Garrett (NJ)
Gingrey
Gohmert
Goode
Goodlatte
Graves
Hastings (WA)
Hensarling
Herger
Hoekstra
Inglis (SC)
Issa
Johnson (IL)
Johnson, Sam
Jordan
Keller
King (IA)
Kingston
Kline (MN)
Lamborn
Lewis (CA)
Linder
Mack
Manzullo
McHenry
McKeon
Mica
Miller (FL)
Murphy, Patrick
Musgrave
Neugebauer
Pence
Petri
Pitts
Poe
Price (GA)
Putnam
Rohrabacher
Royce
Ryan (WI)
Sali
Schwartz
Sensenbrenner
Sessions
Shadegg
Stearns
Sullivan
Thornberry
Walberg
Wamp
Weldon (FL)
Westmoreland
Wicker
Wilson (SC)

NOT VOTING—15

Berkley
Conyers
Cubin
Davis, Jo Ann
Hastert
Hooley
Jindal
McCrery
Paul
Radanovich
Sánchez, Linda T.
Shuster
Slaughter
Tancredo
Young (AK)

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (during the vote). Members are advised that there are 2 minutes remaining to vote on passage of the bill.

□ 2221

So the bill was passed.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

AUTHORIZING THE CLERK TO MAKE CORRECTIONS IN ENGROSSMENT OF H.R. 1851, SECTION 8 VOUCHER REFORM ACT OF 2007

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the Clerk be authorized to make technical corrections in the engrossment of H.R. 1851, to include corrections in spelling, punctuation, section numbering and cross-referencing, and the insertion of headings.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Massachusetts?

There was no objection.

LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM

(Mr. BLUNT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. Speaker, I yield to my friend from Maryland, the majority leader, for the purpose of inquiring about next week's schedule.

Mr. HOYER. I thank my friend.

I first would announce, notwithstanding the requests of almost every Member in the House and over their vigorous objection, we're not going to be meeting tomorrow. You know that.

But we will come back on Monday, and the House will meet at 12:30 for morning hour business, 2 p.m. for legislative business, with votes rolled until 6:30 p.m.

On Tuesday, the House will meet at 9 a.m. for morning hour business and 10 a.m. for legislative business. On Wednesday and Thursday, the House will meet at 10 a.m.

In addition to several bills under suspension of the rules, a list of those bills will be, as is the practice, announced by the close of business tomorrow, we expect to complete consideration of the fiscal year 2008 Energy and Water Development appropriations bill and the fiscal year 2008 Labor, HHS and Education appropriations bill. Again, to the great disappointment of the Members, there will be no votes on Friday.

Mr. BLUNT. Well, I sensed the sadness on those Friday opportunities to work in the district, and I'm glad we're working those out for our Members.

On the schedule next week, I'm wondering if we should anticipate any votes next week on Iraq. We voted today on an Iraq withdrawal bill that was introduced just 2 days ago. That bill wasn't noticed on last week's schedule. It didn't go through committee. It didn't have a hearing; didn't go into the Rules Committee until 1:30 on Wednesday, and I'm wondering if we're going to see anything like that on an Iraq bill next week.

I yield to my friend.

Mr. HOYER. I thank my friend for yielding. And I want to tell the gentleman it's possible that there will be a vote on some facet of our policy in Iraq next week. I don't know when that would be, and I don't want to say that it will be, but it is possible.

Mr. BLUNT. I thank my friend for that. Though that possibility is one that I'm surprised wasn't in the potential work for next week, though I hear that it's not in the scheduled work for next week, I'm wondering if we would see an Iraq bill next week or in the following week, will those bills go through committee, or will we just, once again, see those bills created and brought to the floor like the bill this week?

I would yield to my friend on that.

Mr. HOYER. I thank my friend for yielding. There may well be bills that we have already considered in committee and/or portions of bills that were considered in committee broken out of those bills and brought to the floor. That is a practice which, as you know, was not unheard of in previous Congresses, and that is possible.

Mr. BLUNT. Using my time here, I would suggest that in the previous Congress, while we did have some votes on Iraq, we did not have votes that didn't have hearings; we didn't have votes that didn't seek information.

At 10:30 at night, I don't want to belabor this in the debate that we've already had today, but I do think that information on these kinds of issues would be helpful if we could gain that through the normal process.

And while we may have talked about Iraq in the normal process, certainly, many of the questions that this bill generated never had a chance to be asked. And just from my own perspective as a Member of Congress, I would think that there's a better way to approach this critically important issue than that.

Mr. HOYER. Will my friend yield?

Mr. BLUNT. I would yield.

Mr. HOYER. I thank the gentleman for his observation.

Of course, the bill that was on the floor was, while not exactly alike, very, very close to legislation we have considered at least twice on this floor, one of which we sent to the President. The President vetoed that legislation.

But with all due respect to my friend, I do not believe either the subject matter or the process that was set forth in that bill was unique and had not been contemplated by, frankly, every Member of the House. It was not the same bill. I understand that. But it was very much like it.

And my answer to your previous question was, there may be similar pieces of legislation which have been considered, either by committees or by the House, that may be brought up next week or the week after.

Mr. BLUNT. Well, I don't remember the bills on the House floor exactly the same way that the leader does, on the House floor in the past. I think there was quite a bit of new material there. And maybe, again, I also think, while we're on this topic, that the result of that vote was also very similar to votes we've had on this topic, and wouldn't anticipate that changing in the next weeks. But if that's the way we're going to spend our time, that is the way we're going to spend some of our time.

I have a couple of questions on conferences that I don't have any information on and I believe my friend may. Last time we talked on the floor, which was almost 2 weeks ago now, you thought we would be going to conference on the 9/11 recommendations bill and the lobbying reform bill in the near future, and I see that the Rules Committee is meeting on Monday concerning the 9/11 bill, and I'm wondering if you have any more information about combining that with something else or why there would be a Rules Committee meeting on that.

I would yield to my friend for any information on that process of going to conference.

Mr. HOYER. I think it is likely that we will go to conference on the 9/11 bill next week. They may link that up with another piece of legislation. But it is likely that we will go to conference next week.

Mr. BLUNT. Are there any other conferences anticipated?

Mr. HOYER. We're obviously hopeful that we can move the lobbying and disclosure conference. The Senate has not agreed to go to conference at this point in time. We're hopeful that they will, so that is a possibility. There may be other conferences, but I don't think so for next week. I don't have any specific information on a conference. The WRDA bill is, I think, pretty close to being ready, but I don't have any specific information on that bill.

Mr. BLUNT. I thank the gentleman.

Mr. HOYER. Will my friend yield?

Mr. BLUNT. I would.

Mr. HOYER. Thank you. I understand the gentleman's concern about Iraq, but I want to say, first of all, that all of us understand on this floor that there is no issue which has the attention more than Iraq of the American people, number one.

Number two, the American people feel it is a critically important issue. Not only does it have their attention, but they think it's critically important.

And my friend will remember, I think, returning here, I received a call Saturday afternoon that we were going to have a session on Sunday. Many of our Members were overseas. But the issue was perceived as so important by the majority leader that he reconvened us, with the Speaker's participation, as you recall, on the following Sunday afternoon.

□ 2230

We voted on a bill that many felt was a very important bill that hadn't gone through a committee late that Sunday evening.

Many people in this country and on this side of the aisle and I think on your side of the aisle feel that Iraq is a critical issue. So I say with all respect, we do intend to continue to address this issue, and we hope the votes do change. If they don't change, they don't change. There is nothing we can do about that. But we can continue to focus on an issue we think is critically important.

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend for his comments on that. I do recall that extraordinary session and dissatisfaction created with some of our Members and maybe with the country, and the country does look at what we do and how we do it and when we do it. They look at what we do over and over again, and it is up to the country to evaluate the purpose served by that. And if they evaluate it to the detriment of the majority, the majority sometimes pays the price for that.

And our troops in the field, not to debate this bill again, also I think, have some reason to anticipate that there should be a point when they are given direction and given an opportunity to follow up on that direction.

The last question I have is on energy. We have heard reports that the majority would hope to move an energy bill the week of July 23, and I have also heard that that bill could be moved in two parts, one dealing with the part of the bill marked up without the Ways and Means portion and then the Ways and Means portion. And I am wondering, as we anticipate that debate, if the leader could give us a sense of whether what we are hearing about that is the likely way that that energy bill will proceed.

I yield to the gentleman.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding. Clearly that is one option that, as the gentleman indicates he has heard, is being discussed. No decision is being made on that yet. However, it is our intention and hope that we will have the energy bill on the floor from the 11 committees that have been considering energy legislation on the floor prior to the August break. The week of the 23rd is, I think, a target week, but we have not made that decision at this point in time. But we do hope that we will have the energy bill on the floor prior to the August break.

Mr. BLUNT. I thank my friend for that. That is helpful information, and

we will proceed with next week's work next week.

HOUR OF MEETING ON TOMORROW AND ADJOURNMENT FROM FRIDAY, JULY 13, 2007 TO MONDAY, JULY 16, 2007

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that when the House adjourns today, it adjourn to meet at 4 p.m. tomorrow, and further, when the House adjourns on that day, it adjourn to meet at 12:30 p.m. on Monday, July 16, 2007, for morning-hour debate.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. ELLISON). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Maryland?

There was no objection.

DISPENSING WITH CALENDAR WEDNESDAY BUSINESS ON WEDNESDAY NEXT

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the business in order under the Calendar Wednesday rule be dispensed with on Wednesday next.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Maryland?

There was no objection.

APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS TO BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE HARRY S TRUMAN SCHOLARSHIP FOUNDATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to 20 U.S.C. 2004(b), and the order of the House of January 4, 2007, the Chair announces the Speaker's appointment of the following Members of the House to the Board of Trustees of the Harry S Truman Scholarship Foundation:

Mr. SKELTON, Missouri; and

Mr. HULSHOF, Missouri.

INITIAL BENCHMARK ASSESSMENT REPORT—MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES (H. DOC. NO. 110–45)

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following message from the President of the United States; which was read and, together with the accompanying papers, without objection, referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs and Committee on Armed Services and ordered to be printed:

To the Congress of the United States:

Consistent with section 1314 of the U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Care, Katrina Recovery, and Iraq Accountability Appropriations Act, 2007 (Public Law 110–28) (the ''Act''), attached is the report that assesses the status of each of the 18 Iraqi benchmarks contained in the Act and declares whether satisfactory progress toward meeting these benchmarks is, or is not, being achieved.

This report has been prepared in consultation with the Secretaries of State and Defense; Commander, Multi-National Forces—Iraq; the United States Ambassador to Iraq; and the Commander of United States Central Command.

GEORGE W. BUSH.

THE WHITE HOUSE, *July 12, 2007*.

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATERS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. WATERS addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. KLEIN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the subject of my Special Order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Florida?

There was no objection.

FREE THE ISRAELI SOLDIERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. KLEIN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. KLEIN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today with great solemnity to mark the 1-year anniversary of the killing of three Israeli soldiers and the kidnapping of two others, Eldad Regev and Udi Goldwasser. On July 12, 2006, Hezbollah terrorists crossed into Israel and attacked two IDF armored jeeps as they were patrolling Israel's northern border.

Eldad is 26, born in Kiryat Motzkin. I met Eldad's brother, Benny, in Israel last summer, just weeks after his brother's kidnapping. He begged us to spread the message back to the United States that we must do everything possible to bring the missing soldiers home. Eldad's family and friends pray every day for Eldad's safety and his swift return. They wrote of him:

''One of the qualities that makes Eldad so special is the kindness of his heart, never hesitating to donate and offer aid to anyone in need. He always likes to stay informed and is constantly involved in everything that is happening around him.''

Udi is 31 from Nahariya. I met Udi's mother just a few months ago when she visited Members of Congress on Capitol Hill. She came to raise awareness about the plight of her son and others who were kidnapped. Udi had just married Karnit when he was captured, and his wife had to spend their 1-year anniversary alone, wondering where her husband was and what condition he was in. His family and friends wrote:

''He's a loving, caring person, always ready to offer a helping hand in any situation. He is a man of principles and values, knowledgeable in many varied subjects.''

Unfortunately, Eldad and Udi are not alone among Israel's missing soldiers. Three weeks before their capture, Hamas kidnapped IDF soldier Gilad Shalit. The Shalit family has also met with many communities across the United States, urging people to remember their son and speak out on his behalf.

I rise tonight to make sure that the plight of these soldiers is not forgotten. I rise to honor the sacrifices of these soldiers and their families who wait every day for news of their circumstances.

Here in my hand I have a copy of their dogtags. The United Jewish Communities around the country delivered a copy of the dogtags to every Member of Congress to help raise awareness that it has been 1 year since the families have heard from their loved ones. It has been 1 whole year since they have seen their husband, son, and brother. These families have heard not one word from the captors about whether they are alive or okay.

I join the families of these soldiers and all freedom-loving Americans in calling for the immediate and unconditional release of Eldad, Udi, and Gilad. America stands with Israel in its refusal to let these soldiers be forgotten. Let their dogtags on the floor of the United States House of Representatives serve as a symbol of unwavering vigilance and support. American families and Israeli families are united in the hope that these families should suffer no longer.

Mr. WAXMAN. Mr. Speaker, one year ago today, Hezbollah militants executed a brazen cross-border attack on an Israeli patrol that killed three and kidnapped Israeli reservists Ehud Goldwasser and Eldad Regev. Weeks before, on June 25, Hamas terrorists infiltrated Israel from Gaza, killing two and abducting Corporal Gilad Shalit.

Earlier this year, I had the opportunity to travel to the region with Speaker NANCY PELOSI. With each Arab leader our delegation pressed the plight of these soldiers. The Speaker personally handed their dog tags to Syrian President Assad and urged him to act on a humanitarian basis to achieve their swift and unconditional return.

Sadly, these three brave soldiers join a longer list of MIAs that includes Zachary Baumel, Yehuda Katz, Zvi Feldman, taken hostage in 1982, and Ron Arad, an Israeli military pilot taken captive in 1986. As long as they are missing, their families, the people of Israel, and supporters of Israel around the world hold a constant vigil praying for their return. I want to recognize the dedicated work of the United Jewish Communities, the Jewish Council for Public Affairs, and a multitude of synagogues, camps and schools around the

country for their efforts to make sure these soldiers are not forgotten.

''Leave no soldier behind,'' is the mantra of many armies. In a nation as small as Israel, where military service is mandatory, the commitment to rescue POWs and MIAs is a national imperative. It is our responsibility as a fellow democracy and steadfast ally to do all we can to help win their freedom.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise to call the House's attention to a very sad anniversary. One year ago today, Hezbollah terrorists crossed into Israel to attack Israeli troops patrolling the Israeli side of the border with Lebanon. They killed three Israeli soldiers, wounded two others and kidnaped Ehud Goldwasser and Eldad Regev. Only a few days earlier, on June 25, 2006, Hamas terrorists likewise crossed into Israel and attacked an IDF position, killing two soldiers, wounding a third and kidnapping Gildad Shalit.

Both of these vicious terrorist organizations, which constantly proclaim their adherence to religion and morality, have denied these three Israeli soldiers contact with the Red Cross or Red Crescent, or direct contact with their families. Despite the recent release of an audio tape, it is not in fact known if these three men are currently alive, if they are injured or if they are well. Not content merely to hold these men as hostages, Hamas and Hezbollah insist on torturing their families with the agony of not knowing about the true condition of their loved ones.

This is true measure of the faith and morality of these terrorists. In the name of religion they inflict agony. In the name of the sacred they perpetrate barbarism. In the name of their faith they degrade other human beings.

Thus they show the true content of their beliefs. Thus they show the world what their vainglorious proclamations amount to: cynical cruelty and cold calculation.

These terrorist groups have sought to transform Gilad, Ehud and Eldad into something they are not: bargaining chips or pawns, a kind of political chattel. Things that can be swapped for favors or sacrificed on a whim. These three men are not things. They are human beings. They have names and they have families. They have rights as captured soldiers and they have rights as human beings.

The House has expressed itself clearly on this matter on March 13th, when it passed H. Res. 107, the bipartisan resolution I introduced demanding the release of these three captives and condemning both the terrorists and their Syrian and Iranian sponsors for their criminal and indecent behavior.

We can not compel Hamas and Hezbollah to release Gilad, Ehud and Eldad any more than we can force them to understand the difference between right and wrong. You can not disgrace someone incapable of shame. But we can stand by our ally, the State of Israel. We can express our sympathy and our concern for the captives and for their families.

We can let the perpetrators of this barbarism know that we have not forgotten what they have done, and what they are continuing to do. We can bear witness. And we can add our voices to all those saying ''Enough. Enough. Let these men go home.''

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I call for the unconditional release of Israeli soldiers still held hostage by terrorists. Exactly one year ago today, Hezbollah terrorists entered territory that unambiguously belongs to Israel under international law, launching an assault into Israel's north that killed three soldiers on patrol, wounded two, and took two others hostage.

The two hostages, Ehud ''Udi'' Goldwasser and Eldad Regev, were injured in the attack, and yet Hezbollah refuses to allow representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross to visit them, a flagrant breach of international law and practice. They have also refused to give the hostages' families any indication that their loved ones are alive. This is particularly worrisome, because reports have surfaced suggesting Goldwasser and Regev could have been critically injured in the attack in which they were taken captive.

Only seventeen days earlier, fundamentalist thugs launched a similar raid out of the Gaza Strip to take hostage another young Israeli soldier on patrol in Israel's south, Corporal Gilad Shalit. He has now been held hostage in Gaza for more than a year. Just two weeks ago a recording of him pleading for help was released on a Hamas website. In this recording, Shalit says that his health is deteriorating and he is in pressing need of long-term hospitalization. It should come as no surprise that his terrorist captors have failed to allow him adequate medical treatment.

Mr. Speaker, Hezbollah and Hamas are clearly to blame for the outbreak of violence in the Middle East last summer. They committed acts of war by kidnapping Israeli soldiers who were conducting regular patrol missions on their own side of the border.

And while last summer's war has receded somewhat into the past, the initial causes for the violence have not yet been addressed. Chief among these is the fact that these three Israeli hostages remain in captivity and that Hezbollah and Hamas remain committed to Israel's violent destruction. United Nations Security Council Resolution 1701, which imposed a ceasefire on Israel's Lebanon front, emphasized, and I quote, ''the need to address the causes that have given rise to the current crisis, including the unconditional release of the abducted Israeli soldiers.'' Unfortunately, that condition remains totally unfulfilled.

Mr. Speaker, this House has not been silent on the plight of these victims of terrorism. Shortly after Udi Goldwasser's young wife visited Congress at the start of this year and pleaded for our help, we swiftly passed H. Res. 107, which was sponsored by my good friend Congressman GARY ACKERMAN, the distinguished chairman of the Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia. This bill called for the unconditional release of the three kidnapped soldiers and condemned the culpable terrorist groups for their despicable actions. The Senate passed a similar bill, which was introduced by Senator HILLARY CLINTON.

Speaker PELOSI has played a particularly admirable role in the global effort to free these three men. When she met with Syrian President Assad in Damascus just this past April, she presented him with a replica of the three hostages' ''dog tags'' as a means of urging him to secure their release from these terrorist groups that Damascus has long hosted and supported. She also made crystal-clear to President Assad that under no circumstances could bilateral relations with the United States improve until Damascus showed its willingness to cease sponsoring terror.

To commemorate the one year anniversary of the kidnapping of Goldwasser and Regev by Hezbollah, the United Jewish Communities recently organized a campaign to send copies of these dog tags to every member of Congress. I commend them for their admirable and thoughtful activism drawing attention to the ongoing plight of the three captives.

Mr. Speaker, Israel is a steadfast ally of the United States, and it is on the frontline of the war against terrorism. Israeli soldiers face such threats every day, much like our own inspiring and steadfast soldiers who are currently serving in harm's way in places like Afghanistan and Iraq. It is incumbent upon us to give our ally in this fight our steadfast support in the face of such terrorist predations.

Mr. Speaker, many of us have been active in efforts over the years to convince our friends in the EU to designate Hezbollah as a terrorist group. A very few EU states do so on a national basis, but the EU collectively continues to view Hezbollah strictly as a political party. This is an absurd anomaly, and I urge our EU friends and allies to reconsider this policy on this sad one-year anniversary. I know of no other ''political party'' in the world that kidnaps and holds hostages—a fairly remarkable innovation in democratic politics. (In contrast to its policy regarding Hezbollah, the EU does designate Hamas as a terrorist group. I am pleased by that, but the distinction between Hamas killers and Hezbollah killers is frankly lost on me.)

Mr. Speaker, I have the following message for the terrorists who are holding the three Israeli soldiers: Release these innocent hostages, and do so without delay. Should you not, the civilized world—and certainly this body—will not remain silent.

Mr. KLEIN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. POE addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

DR. BERNARD SIEGAN: RECLAIMING A REPUTATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. ROHRABACHER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to correct the record concerning a great economist and friend, the late Dr. Bernard Siegan, a distinguished professor of law at the University of San Diego. In 1988 Dr. Siegan was nominated by President Ronald Reagan to the U.S. Court of Appeals. He promptly came under personal attack, most notably from Professor Lawrence Tribe of Harvard University.

Tribe wrote a public letter on May 28, 1987, to Senator Joseph Biden belittling Dr. Siegan as being outside the mainstream of American jurisprudence. Tribe further asserted that Dr. Siegan ''reveals himself to be not a judicial conservative but an ideologue of the right, one who would deploy the Constitution in service of a conservative economic philosophy.''

In a widely quoted section of his letter, Professor Tribe assailed Dr. Siegan's support of the Brown v. Board of Education ruling as ''a component of the right to travel, a right long secured by the Federal courts,'' which was, of course, Dr. Siegan's reason for supporting Brown v. Board of Education.

At the time Professor Tribe claimed that this legal view was ''tortured'' and part of ''Mr. Siegan's radical revisionism.'' At the conclusion of the letter, Professor Tribe wrote, ''The notion that it is a black child's freedom to 'travel' onto the school grounds that segregation laws infringed is so bizarre and strained . . . as to bring into question both Mr. Siegan's competence as a constitutional lawyer and his sincerity as a scholar.'' This type of assault was typical of the attacks which preceded the defeat of Dr. Siegan's nomination. That was back in 1987. And much has changed since then.

By the time that Dr. Siegan died in March of 2006, he had many books and speeches and articles that made him one of the most prolific and respected legal and constitutional scholars on the political right. He is today credited with being a father of the recurrent rejuvenation of property rights theory in law.

In response to Dr. Siegan's defense of his views regarding Brown v. Board of Education, Tribe replied in a letter to Dr. Siegan's wife, and this was September 6, 1991: ''I have reconsidered my description of your analysis of Brown v. Board of Education in footnote 10 on page 1379 of the second edition of American Constitutional Law. I agree with your general approach that Brown can be justified by arguing from the 'liberty' component of the 14th amendment . . . ''

Now, that was a letter sent to Siegan years later by Dr. Tribe and when Dr. Tribe and Dr. Siegan were corresponding. These letters were found by his wife, Shelley. Tribe in that same letter writes: ''Although I do not reach the same conclusions you do, the issues you raise are important enough to be worthy of scholarly discussion. I am now in the process of drafting a rather substantial supplement to my treatise summarizing recent developments in constitutional law. In my discussion of the equal protection clause, I will include a citation to your book that I am sure will please you more than the citation did in the last book.''

□ 2245

Unfortunately for the public reputation of Dr. Siegan, Professor Tribe never did complete the supplement to his treatise, and Dr. Siegan, of course, passed away after that exchange of letters.

Mrs. Siegan wrote to Professor Tribe after discovering these letters and asked Dr. Tribe for information on the planned, but not completed, supplement. She also asked the following question: ''In the 19 years since you penned your letter to JOE BIDEN, I wonder if you have reconsidered your comment regarding Bernie's competence as a constitutional lawyer and a serious scholar?'' Tribe replied to Mrs. Siegan on September 21, 2006. ''Please permit me,'' he wrote, ''to apologize to you here for the unnecessarily ad hominem character of what I wrote to Senator BIDEN in May of 1987. To help correct the record, if only posthumously, I am sending a copy of this letter to Senator BIDEN. Despite the differences in our perspectives,'' he said, ''I came to think of Bernie, just as you write that he thought of me, as a colleague in the profession we both truly love and consider to be one of the noblest.''

I would submit the rest of this statement for the RECORD and note that Lawrence Tribe has set the Record straight, and now the Record is straight on the great person and great scholar that Dr. Bernard Siegan was.

I am sorry to have caused him, or you, any distress, and am grateful for the opportunity your letter afforded me to set the record straight as best I could at this late date.

Mr. Speaker, the correspondence between Professors Bernard Siegan and Lawrence Tribe and the subsequent correspondence between Shelly Siegan and Professor Tribe tell us much about the ugly period of personal attack this country experienced during the judicial nomination hearings of the 1980s.

A review of the above cited letters makes it clear that Professor Bernard Siegan was a distinguished and respected scholar and champion of personal liberty and private property. Contrary to assertions made during his nomination hearings in 1987, Professor Bernard Siegan would have made an excellent addition to the Ninth District Circuit Court of Appeals. And now the record is set straight.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Connecticut (Ms. DELAURO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. DELAURO addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. JONES of North Carolina addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. WOOLSEY addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

U.S. TRADE POLICY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, the United States has just announced the second highest monthly trade deficit for this year, $60 billion. That is just in the month of May. Our Nation continues to import more goods and services than we export at alarming rates, with a record $192 billion more coming into this country in the earlier part of this year than going out.

This particular chart shows the top category of concern, imported petroleum, which has continued to rise, including in this Presidential administration, despite President Bush's statement at the beginning of his administration that we have a serious problem. America is addicted to oil, which is being imported from some of the most unstable parts of the world. He said that, and yet he continued to allow the import of more petroleum.

Americans are watching as our government does nothing to curb these growing trade deficits, with their accompanying job losses, deteriorating labor conditions and community washouts that U.S. trade policy leaves in its wake.

A bill I have sponsored, H.R. 169, the Balancing Trade Act of 2007, requires the President, if over 3 consecutive calendar years the United States has a trade deficit with another country that totals over $10 billion, to take the necessary steps to create a trading relationship that would eliminate or substantially reduce that trade deficit by entering into better agreements with that country. In other words, if the United States runs a substantial deficit with any one country, the President must report back to Congress on his plans for correcting that imbalance. This is a very constructive first step to correct the path of U.S. trade policy which is yielding this red ink.

Our bill calls attention to those countries who are taking advantage of our willingness to import goods from them while they block our access to their markets. Our two largest deficits in 2006, for example, were first with China. This is a country we have amassed a $232.5 billion deficit. That is an enormous amount, comprising about a quarter of what we have amassed with all countries in the world. And the deficit with China has just grown at alarming proportions.

The next largest deficit is with Japan. That has been a lingering deficit that has been growing over the years. It now totals about one-third of what we accumulate with China; it's about $88.4 billion. And every billion in deficit equals a loss of between 10,000 and 20,000 jobs in this country. That is a displacement in production in this country, putting it someplace else.

Now, these deficits have persisted for years, which makes them particularly troublesome. This chart illustrates our deficit with China pre and post what is called ''normal trade relations'' with China. We had a very bad deficit already back in the late 1990s, but with the adoption of permanent trade relations with China, that deficit has more than doubled.

If we had taken steps to correct this deficit at the beginning of the downward turn rather than turning our backs on it and allowing more red ink with China, our country would be stronger today. It would not have the kind of annual budget deficits that we're having. And we would be more economically secure here at home and, frankly, politically secure in the world. Instead, we continue to sacrifice our jobs to the lowest bidders in closed markets that do not follow rules of free trade. Free trade can be productive and it can be profitable, but only if it is free trade among free people.

Trading with closed economies that manipulate currency, that choose not to enforce what scant labor standards they might have, and otherwise levy very restrictive non-tariff barriers against our products harm our economy. America, wake up. We can no longer ignore the games that our competition is playing with us. We must trade for America; not for secret, non-transparent governments to prosper off our unwillingness to hold them to democratic standards or, at the very least, the rules of truly free trade among free people.

I urge my colleagues to join me in requiring the President to address this issue by cosponsoring our bill, H.R. 169. We must take action to reduce the trade deficit and restore our economic independence, competitiveness and begin creating jobs across our country again.

DEMOCRATS' BROKEN PROMISES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. I would like to say to my colleagues who may be in their offices that were going to join me in a special order tonight that we're not going to be able to do it because of the late hour. So I'm going to take a 5-minute special order to talk about some of the issues we were going to discuss.

Today, we discussed at length the war in Iraq. And that's probably the most important issue facing America today, and I'm glad we had that very thorough debate.

But one of the things that's very, very important that we're not focusing enough attention on is transparency in government and the amount of money that we're spending and the taxes that are going to be raised.

When this new Speaker and the majority came into power, they said this was going to be the most transparent House in the history of the country, in all respects. And just 2 weeks ago, the majority wanted to start talking about a Slush fund rather than debating each one of the earmarks that should have been debated on this floor. And they were going to take that Slush fund money and go to the conference committee and behind closed doors decide how that money was going to be spent. The American people don't want that. The American people want to hear these issues debated, the amount of money being debated for special projects, so they know where their tax dollars are going and what the purpose is.

Not all earmarks are bad. Some of them are very, very good and very necessary, but they ought to be debated one by one on this floor so the American people know where their money is going.

I would like to also say that the budget that was passed by the opposition is going to necessitate at least a $217 billion tax increase, and in all probability it will be more like $392 billion, which would be the largest tax increase in the history of this country. And that, at a time when we need to address some of the more pressing issues, like how we deal with the Social Security trust fund.

The Social Security trust fund will go into deficit in 10 years. And at that point, we're going to see the American people starting to look at Social Security as a program that's going to be in the past, no longer something that we can rely on in the future.

The young people in this country are going to have a terrible time planning for their retirement because there won't be any money in the Social Security trust fund in the future for these young people unless we start addressing the problem right now, and we're not doing it.

As I said, the projected tax collections for Social Security and the spending for Social Security are going to be exceeded in 10 years. And after that, adjusting for inflation, the annual deficits for Social Security will reach $68 billion in the year 2020, $267 billion in 2030, and $331 billion in 2035. Many of us won't be around to see that, but our kids and our grandkids will, and they will be saying, why didn't we address the issue of the deficits and Social Security when we had a chance?

We can do that still today, but we're not focusing attention on that. And the people who are relying on Social Security and the Social Security trust fund ought to know that we're not addressing the problem. And the solvency of that fund, not for us, but for the future generations, is not going to be there, which means that we will have to either raise taxes or cut benefits. This is going to happen unless we address that issue.

So I would just like to say to my colleagues tonight, we are concentrating on the major issues, the war in Iraq, and a lot of other issues that are very important, but we must not neglect the budget. We must not neglect transparency and bringing these issues to the floor for debate, and we must not neglect addressing the issue of Social Security reform, because if we don't do it, our kids and our grandkids aren't going to have a retirement program to rely on.

SPENDING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

In order for the government to be held accountable to the taxpayers that fund it, the American people deserve truth in budgeting and have a right to know how federal dollars are spent.

Two weeks ago, House conservatives—on behalf of taxpayers—led the charge to demand transparency in the Federal spending process.

In stark contrast to the views they espoused during the 2006 campaign cycle Appropriations Committee Chairman OBEY and the Democrat leadership proposed to leave lump sums of money without a specified purpose in the appropriations bills considered by the House, and later authorizing those funds for earmarks in closed door Conference Committee. In other words, the very people who promised America: "We will bring transparency and openness to the budget process and to the use of earmarks, and we will give the American people the leadership they deserve." (PELOSI Press Release 12/11/2006)

Instead they proposed to create a secret slush fund for earmarks—to be funded by the largest tax increase in American history. Make no mistake about it; the budget passed by House Democrats includes what will likely become the largest tax increase in history. Though they try to claim otherwise, the truth is in black and white in the language of their own bill; and the truth is that it will raise taxes by at least $217 billion and in all likelihood $392 billion.

Conservatives were successful in stopping the slush fund and bringing transparency to earmarks; bringing them into the light of day where they can be debated and voted on by Members of this House.

Not all earmarks are bad things, but not all earmarks are a Federal priority. But we should respect the American people enough to stand up and debate this issue. The simple argument that, "it's a good project" should never be enough to justify spending taxpayer dollars on it in lieu of a more pressing national priority, or returning the money to American families.

Achieving transparency is only half the battle, as conservatives we now need to push accountability; because without enforcing accountability, transparency doesn't mean much. Accountability in Federal spending can be achieved through an open and honest debate about America's priorities.

Tonight, I want to talk about a priority—a crisis that my Democrat colleagues are ignoring in their rush to raise your taxes and spend more money on entitlement programs; namely the impending bankruptcy of Social Security.

SOCIAL SECURITY SURPLUS SPENDING

A safe, secure, and stable retirement is part of the American dream. Yet time and again, Washington has proven itself incapable of managing Americans' hard earned Social Security dollars. There is no longer a debate about whether Social Security faces a problem or whether it needs to fixed.

There is something fundamentally wrong when more young Americans believe in the existence of UFOs than believe that their Social Security benefits will be there for them when they retire. Why do young Americans feel this way? Because they can see the obvious—that Washington has been spending taxpayer dollars that have already been promised to help make their retirement more sustainable.

Taxpayers have the right to receive back each and every dollar—and more—that they entrust to the government for their retirement. Social Security money collected from Americans for Social Security should not be used for anything other than Social Security. Ensuring a stable retirement is not a Republican or Democrat obligation, it is an American obligation.

Despite passing the largest tax increase in American history, the Democrat majority failed to stop raiding the Social Security surplus. In fact, they fail to address entitlements at all. In contrast budget offered by Congressman PAUL RYAN protected the surplus.

Since 1984, the Federal Government has collected more money in Social Security taxes than it pays out in benefits. Instead of using this money to shore up the program's solvency, the government squandered these tax payer dollars on other programs, and earmarks.

Each year that Congress fails to protect the Social Security cash flow surplus, and squanders its money on other programs, it jeopardizes the stability of this vital government program and hastens its date of insolvency.

By controlling and prioritizing government spending, the FY 2008 Republican budget creates surplus of $99 billion in 2012, stopping the raid on Social Security in 2012—and did it without raising taxes. This gives the taxpayers the accountability that they deserve.

Social Security owes $6.8 trillion more in benefits than it will receive in taxes. That number includes $2.0 trillion, in net present value terms, to repay the bonds in Social Security's trust fund.

Today's Social Security is not sustainable and will implode. Social Security spending will exceed projected tax collections in 2017. These deficits will quickly balloon to alarming proportions. After adjusting for inflation, annual deficits will reach $67.8 billion in 2020, $266.5 billion in 2030, and $330.9 billion in 2035.

The year when Social Security begins to spend more than it takes in, 2017, is extremely important. From that point on, Social Security will require large and growing amounts of general revenue money in order to pay all of its promised benefits. Even though this money will technically come from cashing in the special issue bonds in the trust fund, the money to repay them will come from other tax collections or borrowing. The billions that go to Social Security each year will make it harder to find money for other government programs or require large and growing tax increases.

A second important year is 2009. Starting in just 2 years, the annual Social Security surpluses that Congress has been borrowing and spending on other programs will begin to shrink. From that point on, Congress will have to find other sources to replace the money that it borrows from Social Security or shrink spending. By 2017, Congress will have about $100 billion less to spend annually.

Compared to these two dates, 2041—the year that the Social Security trust fund runs out of its special issue bonds—has little importance. Even though the end of those bonds will require a 25 percent benefit reduction, Congress would have been paying over $300 billion a year, in 2007 dollars, to repay those bonds for about 7 years by the time the trust fund runs out. Congress will have to do this through some combination of other spending cuts, new taxes, or additional borrowing. These are the same choices Congress would face without the trust fund.

Bad news for younger workers. Unfortunately, younger workers have a great deal to worry about. Even though their parents' and grandparents' benefits are safe, theirs are not. Any worker born after 1974 will reach full retirement age after the trust fund is exhausted. Unless Congress acts, younger workers can look forward to paying full Social Security taxes throughout their careers but only receiving 75 percent or less of the benefits that have been promised to them. In addition, they will have to repay the Social Security trust fund, an expense that will total almost $6 trillion by the time the trust fund is exhausted in 2041.

Democrat's delay is deadly for Social Security. Each year, there is one less year of surplus and one more year of deficit. Once those deficits begin in 2017, the Trustees Report shows that they will never end. Each year, with the disappearance of another year of surplus, reforming Social Security gets more expensive.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. LEE addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mr. TOWNS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. TOWNS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. MCCAUL) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. MCCAUL of Texas addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

HONORING RISING CITY VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. FORTENBERRY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. FORTENBERRY. Mr. Speaker, on the Fourth of July, during a celebration to mark the opening of a new volunteer fire station in Rising City, Nebraska, I was introduced to two extraordinary volunteer firefighters, Mr. Rich Topil and Mr. Don Fish.

Rising City, like so many rural communities in Nebraska, relies on the good efforts of volunteer firefighters to meet their needs for fire protection as well as life-saving services. These volunteers act out of a sense of dedication and duty to the communities that they serve.

On Independence Day, the citizens of Rising City recognized Mr. Topil and Mr. Fish for having served as volunteer firefighters for an unbelievable total of 117 combined years. It was only fitting that these two men were honored by the people to whom they have given so much.

Mr. Speaker, Independence Day is when we traditionally celebrate the best of America; family, community and country. And Mr. Topil and Mr. Fish and the citizens of Rising City, Nebraska, remind us all that these values remain very strong and very vibrant.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MCCARTHY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. MCCOTTER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. MCCOTTER addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

NEW ORLEANS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. JEFFERSON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. JEFFERSON. Mr. Speaker, since Hurricane Katrina, the great New Orleans area has been in disarray. While there have been innumerable promises to ensure the region's recovery, a comprehensive response here in Washington to the tragedy back home has not been forthcoming. The citizens of my great city are appreciative of the efforts that have been made. However, much more needs to be done at a vastly more urgent pace.

It has now been 23 months since Hurricane Katrina hit and the faulty levees built by the Army Corps of Engineers collapsed and flooded our homes and businesses. The levees have still not been built back to acceptable standards.

It has been 23 months since nearly half of our residents have had no place in which to return. It has been 23 months, and investors cannot properly use tax credits to bring back rental properties.

It has been 23 months, and most small businesses are still at a standstill, still not back in place.

It has been 23 months, and less than half of our doctors, health care providers and hospitals are back home. Katrina evacuees and survivors have been studied, reported upon and promised to. They now want and deserve real solutions. One way where we could make a significant impact on the growth, repair and the redevelopment of our region is through some tax reforms in areas related to our recovery.

Even before Katrina, the greater New Orleans area was considered one of a high health care service shortage.

Since Katrina, the program is exacerbated. Of the 669,000 residents of the greater New Orleans area, 125,000 have no form of health insurance. The area lacks an adequate availability of health care providers to deal with delivery of health services. Furthermore, post-Katrina, the area lost 89 percent of its psychiatrists and mental health providers. Amando Lo of the Physicians Resource Group states that, ''The city's medical center is hanging on by a thread.''

□ 2300

One possible start towards a remedy of this problem has been offered by the greater New Orleans Health Service Corps. The mission of this program is to sustain and increase access to health care services in the greater New Orleans area by reducing the shortage of critical health care professionals through targeted recruitment and retention strategies. ''The program offers a variety of incentives,'' says Gayla Strahan, the program's coordinator.

One specifically is school loan repayment. However, whereas similar programs under the Public Health Service Act are tax exempt, these are not. Changing this oversight has the potential to greatly effect the decision to come to the region. Drs. Mordaci Potash and Micheala King, recipients of the grant program in the New Orleans area, both say that receiving the grants have been incredibly helpful. However, the taxes to be paid on these grants are a huge burden. Indeed, the taxes they say that are required to be paid are so burdensome they totally undermine the incentive value of the grants altogether, and to such an extent that they are thinking of actually turning down the award and practicing elsewhere. Therefore, one way we can ameliorate the health care problems in our city and the retention and recovery of our health care professionals is to make these grants nontaxable.

Housing is still a dire need in the New Orleans area. There is still an overall shortage of housing since Katrina. Furthermore, most housing that is available is unaffordable to the working class families and the working poor. Greg Rigamer, CEO of GCR & Associates, a group that studies demographics in the area and the economic conditions relating to it, stated that rents have risen 40 percent and the average home selling price has jumped 25 percent.

Earlier this year, Milton Bailey, president of the Louisiana Housing Finance Authority, spoke before the Ways and Means Committee primarily about extending the placed in service date for low-income housing tax credit projects. However, there is so much more that could and needs to be done in this area. Bailey warns if the wording in the tax code relating to credit carryover in the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 does not get corrected, the phrasing will stymie the deployment of Go Zone per capita tax credits.

A solution to that would be to rewrite or delete that section, section 1400(c)(1)(c) in the Internal Revenue Code. A failure to do this will jeopardize the entire tax credit program, and the entire credit ceiling in any year reduces the credit ceiling, which would greatly hurt the region.

Finally, the current Louisiana Road Home program gives a financial incentive for residents to return to New Orleans. The grants received are to be used to buy or repair homes lost in the storm. However, there is even doubt as to whether these grants are taxable.

Earlier this year, I introduced H.R. 1445, the Tax Free Road Home Act of 2007. This would amend the Internal Revenue Code to exclude from gross income payments to individual taxpayers from the Louisiana Road Home Program for rebuilding or renewing a personal residence. As with the Health Service Corps, we need to have these grants to be tax exempt. Our people have already been through enough, primarily because of the negligence of the Federal Government in designing and constructing our levee system. Requiring them now to pay taxes on recovery moneys is an additional burden they should not have to bear. It is time to get our tax policies right for the Gulf region if we truly want our people to return, our area to recover, and the promises we made to be met.

TIME TO END THE MISTAKEN WAR IN IRAQ

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mr. HALL) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. HALL of New York. Mr. Speaker, a recent CRS report shows that the United States is now spending $10 billion a month fighting the war in Iraq. That is over $2.5 billion a week. And what does the American taxpayer get for this $10 billion a month? An army, nearly broken by repeated deployments; a National Guard that is unwilling and unable to respond to natural disasters or terrorist attacks at home because many of our men and women are in Iraq and most of their equipment is; an escalation in Iraq that has resulted in more death and little reduction in violence; an Iraqi government that is unable to govern; Iraqi Security Forces that refuse to fully stand up.

The war in Iraq costs every man, woman and child in New York's Nineteenth District $3,077. For over $3,000 a person, the people of my district have gotten a war that was a strategic mistake and has made them less safe.

Today, the House of Representatives considered another bill for a responsible withdrawal from the war in Iraq. The Responsible Redeployment From Iraq Act requires U.S. troops to redeploy from Iraq by April 1, 2008. After 4 years of repeated failure and little accountability, the new Congress is working to repair the damage done to our military and change the direction of this country.

When the President came to Congress to ask for additional funding for the war in Iraq, I established a guiding principle for determining my vote. Any legislation I voted for would have to contain a responsible specific timeline to redeploy U.S. troops out of Iraq. Furthermore, the bill would have to contain benchmarks that would hold the Iraqi government accountable.

Following this principle, I voted four times in 5 months to provide nearly $100 billion for extra military spending in Iraq and Afghanistan, including extra money to improve our fight against al Qaeda in Afghanistan. These bills also required the Iraqi parliament to meet specific benchmarks to reduce violence and limit sectarian violence. Further, they required the President to follow troop readiness standards established by our own Pentagon. Unfortunately, the President ignored the will of the American people and vetoed the first bill that Congress sent him.

The President blindly insists that America continue down the same path in Iraq. The President's path has left our troops in the middle of Iraq's civil war, weakened U.S. national security, and is devastating our military's ability to fight.

The President refuses to listen to his own State Department's report showing that the Taliban is reemerging as a dominant force in Afghanistan, dramatized by the most recent disheartening sight of young girls being machine-gunned as they left their school, a tactic that is used to try to intimidate parents into not sending their girls to school.

Our men and women in uniform in both Iraq and Afghanistan have performed bravely and worked to achieve every mission their leadership has given them. Our troops have performed heroically in Iraq. But the administration concedes that violence remains high; that the Iraqi government has failed to meet the benchmarks endorsed by the President in January; that political reconciliation is nonexistent.

Finally, after years of silence, even President Bush's allies have realized that the current path in Iraq cannot be sustained. Senator DOMENICI says, ''There is no reason to wait. I am trying to tell the President that he must change his ways because there is nothing positive happening.'' And Senator LAMAR ALEXANDER said, ''The President needs a new strategy.''

It is time our troops had leadership worthy of their service, leadership that will give them achievable missions that improve the security of the American people.

That is why I supported the Responsible Redeployment From Iraq Act that requires that the President publicly justify the number of troops he needs to carry out post-redeployment missions such as protecting embassy staff, force protection, and fighting international terrorist organizations in Iraq. It is time the American people saw a change in our course.

In the time it has taken me to give this speech, we have spent another roughly $1 million in Iraq. $1 million for every 5 minutes we spend in Iraq, for a war that has made us less safe and has weakened our military.

It is time to change our course in Iraq and refocus on the threats in Afghanistan, where the 9/11 attacks were planned and the al Qaeda and the Taliban continue to plot. It is time we end our mistaken war in Iraq.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. DEFAZIO addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. SCHIFF) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. SCHIFF addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

DISCUSSING THE WAR IN IRAQ

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. SUTTON) is recognized for half the time until midnight as the designee of the majority leader.

Ms. SUTTON. Mr. Speaker, as the hour grows late here this evening, I and some of my fellow freshmen colleagues have gathered here on the floor to talk about the issue that is overarching everything we do in this country today, the war in Iraq.

When we were elected in November, many of us came here on a mandate for change, a mandate for a change of direction in the way the country was heading and a mandate for change in direction in Iraq. So, tonight we are here to talk about the important events of this day, the action that this House took to pass a very important bill, the Responsible Redeployment From Iraq Act, and also to talk about the report that was recently released from the White House on Iraq and the benchmarks that, sadly, are not being met.

With that, I would like to actually turn this discussion over to some of my fellow colleagues. We will begin with a statement and some commentary from the gentleman from New Hampshire, the distinguished gentleman from New Hampshire, Mr. PAUL HODES.

Mr. HODES. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague.

I am happy to be here tonight with my colleagues to speak about the issue that predominates in the minds of the people of this country, certainly in the minds of my constituents.

We are in a disastrous and unnecessary war in Iraq. I have received literally thousands of letters, phone calls and e-mails from the constituents of the Second District of New Hampshire, the people I represent, the people who sent me to Congress, telling me one thing loud and clear: They want us out of this miserable war. They want our troops out of the impossible trap of being caught in multiple sectarian conflicts.

I have only been in office for 6 months, yet I have received thousands and thousands of communications from the people I represent. It is past time to change course.

Now, when we do change course, and it is inevitable that we will change course, we must do it responsibly and with a view towards ensuring that our core values and our vital national security interests are protected. We are not talking about precipitous withdrawals. Today, when we passed the Responsible Redeployment From Iraq Act, we made sure that we set a stage for a responsible course for redeployment of our troops, not a precipitous withdrawal.

Day after day, poll after poll, letter after letter, plea after plea, the American people, and certainly the people of New Hampshire, are demanding we bring this war to a responsible end. As we sit here today, we unfortunately are witness to a stunning lack of leadership, a failure of leadership, a failure to face the reality from the Bush administration.

The President's sad and sorry statement today was counterpoint to the mistakes that have been made in the past. In the absence of leadership from the White House, Congress has the duty to pick up the ball. We have the duty to exercise the moral leadership, the courage and the boldness that the American people know will be necessary to forge a responsible and comprehensive strategy to protect our security interests and lead this country back to a place where our military is strong, where our troops are fighting the right fight against al Qaeda, and where the American people's trust is restored in their leadership.

So I am glad to be here tonight, and I yield back to you, Ms. SUTTON.

Ms. SUTTON. Mr. Speaker, I thank the distinguished gentleman for his eloquent words about this very, very tragic subject.

At this point I yield to the gentlewoman from New Hampshire for her comments.

Ms. SHEA-PORTER. Mr. Speaker, it has been 4 years and we are now in our fifth year of war, and once again the Nation stops to assess where are we? And probably the best indicator of where we are was the front page of the Washington Post today.

□ 2315

The first article, ''CIA Said Instability Seemed Irreversible.'' That is the instability in Iraq.

Second article, ''White House Gives Iraq Mixed Marks in Report.'' Unfortunately, Iraq did not meet any of the benchmarks set by the Bush administration and the Congress.

Third article, ''U.S. Warns of Stronger al Qaeda.'' What we are talking about there is the resurgence of al Qaeda in Pakistan and in Afghanistan where it is no longer safe for girls to go to school once again, and where the drug crop is stronger than ever and where we have made no gains at all. Why haven't we made any gains after 4 years? Because we have been dragged into Iraq, into a war without end, by a President who did not understand the region, who is indifferent to the problems, the cultural differences and the problems they are experiencing, and who has not listened to the world. He has not listened to America, and has not listened to his generals and advisors on this.

Now they are asking us for more time. As a member of the Armed Services Committee, there is nothing that upsets me more than hearing somebody stand and ask for more time after 4 long years; more time for the surge, I heard today, that the surge hasn't had time to work. My question to the gentleman was: Which surge are we talking about? I lose track because we have had so many surges. Which surge are we talking about?

Then they say that the President needs more time. Then I hear General Petraeus needs more time. Always we need more time.

How about this. We have a democracy, a young democracy, the President says, in Iraq, and more than half of the people in that parliament signed a petition asking the United States to leave. Now we said we would leave if another nation like Iraq asked us to leave. And yet we hear absolute silence from the President. He will not leave despite of the fact that the government he had elected there has asked us to leave.

It costs us $10 billion a month. When I speak to my constituents, they are all asking, why don't we have money have money for this? We need money for health care. We have a problem with infrastructure. And we just don't have the money for this; this program is being cut back. And my answer over and over is what everybody else is having to tell the good people in this country who need our resources, this is what we have to tell them, you can't have two wars, tax cuts for the top 1 percent, the greatest deficits in history, and still provide for the American people.

We have a decision to make. We have an opportunity finally to provide a responsible road map out of Iraq; and yet we have a President and an administration that is indifferent to this road map.

It is now our responsibility to respond to the American people, to respond to the world and try once again to get the President's attention and once again to ask to please end the craziness here after the thousands of deaths of American soldiers, the injuries which we will be paying for, and should pay for. It is our obligation to honor our commitments to our soldiers, but we will be paying for this for so many years. And we also have an obligation to the Iraqis. We don't even know how many have died because we don't really count them.

What we do know about Iraq is that that culture has been decimated, that those who can leave have left. The countries surrounding Iraq have a large number of refugees, and people living inside Iraq are afraid to go out on their streets.

When I was in Iraq in March, I had an opportunity to speak to Sunni and Shiite women. It was very clear to me that they were unable to resolve their differences. They were so full of mistrust and hatred for each other that they were in the midst of a civil war. Yet we stay there and we continue to put our soldiers in the middle of a civil war, and we continue to be deaf to the cries of the rest of the world.

So we are standing here tonight asking once again for the President to listen to the American people, to listen to reason, to listen to the military leaders who never talk about a military victory any more. They simply talk about stabilizing Iraq, and the question has to be stabilizing Iraq; wasn't Iraq stable 4 years ago? Is this the result we get after 4 years of war?

I thank our soldiers for their incredible commitment to this country. I have had an opportunity to see some of them leave. I have nothing but the deepest respect for them. I know that the Army is suffering under the strain of a 4-year war. The soldiers and their families are suffering under the strain. I know that they have asked us to speak up for them because they are unable to.

So we stand here once again tonight for the people, for the soldiers, and ask the President to please start a responsible road map out of Iraq.

Ms. SUTTON. I thank the gentlewoman for her comments. Your points are well taken. After 4½ years of this tragic war, more than 3,600 brave American troops killed, more than 26,000 injured, and nearly half a trillion dollars spent, we continue down the path that the President insists on taking us.

In his defiance, he has indicated he will continue to ignore reality, as well as the facts contained in the administration's own analysis of the war that was released today.

As you point out, in January, the President sent thousands of additional troops to Iraq and promised to hold the Iraqi government accountable for meeting those benchmarks for success. Today that report makes it clear that we need a change in course.

Unity in Iraq, we know here on this floor, must be determined by the people of Iraq, and our brave troops are caught in the crossfire of a sectarian civil war without a military mission, and the President has no plan to bring them home.

Instead of rejecting calls for change and demeaning those who seek it, the President should listen to the military experts, to Congress and the American people who in their will and wisdom want to responsibly redeploy the troops home.

With that, I would like to yield to the gentleman from New York (Mr. ARCURI).

Mr. ARCURI. I thank my friend and colleague from the Rules Committee.

Mr. Speaker, I, like so many Americans, have tried to be patient with this administration in extricating us from the difficulties we are in in Iraq. Like so many other Americans, I want to believe that our country is doing the right thing and we are taking the correct steps and doing everything that needs to be done to bring our troops home. But it is very difficult when we see and experience what we have experienced.

You know, first they told us that there were weapons of mass destruction. None were found. Yet the American people continued to be patient.

Then they told us we were in Iraq to remove a tyrant. We removed Saddam Hussein; our soldiers fought valiantly and well. Yet we are still there at the present time despite the fact that Saddam Hussein has been removed from power and has been executed.

Then they told us we were there to fight terrorism, and we have been fighting terrorism, and we continue to fight terrorism, and yet our troops remain there.

Now they tell us we are there to make our families safer. Well, I for one don't feel that my family is any safer today than they were when we went into Iraq. In fact, I think that my family is far less safe.

This administration tells us that we are there to fight terrorism, that we are there to fight al Qaeda, and yet we hear that al Qaeda is now stronger than it has been since before 9/11. So, again, I ask the question: Why are we in Iraq? Why are we sacrificing American lives? Twenty-six thousand have been injured; 3,600 Americans have been killed. Nearly a half trillion dollars has been spent, and yet still we are in Iraq and still we are no safer than we were before 9/11.

People ask me: What are we doing? How are we making our country safer? What are you doing to bring the troops home? And it is very difficult to answer because it is sort of like trying to hit a moving target. Every time that a benchmark is set, every time a question is asked, this administration moves the target. They tell us we are in Iraq on a surge that will tell us in 60 to 90 days where we will be. Then today we hear from this administration we only now can begin the surge because only now are we fully up to speed. Yet we see our Armed Forces at the weakest point they have been in many years.

Our National Guard is not where it should be, here State side; rather, our National Guard is overseas. They are not in a position to help should we need them here. Should we have another disaster like Hurricane Katrina, our National Guard is not here. Rather, they are serving overseas. These are the things that this administration has failed the American people on.

The violence in Iraq continues. The Iraq government has failed to meet the key benchmarks endorsed by the President in January, and political reconciliation is nonexistent.

And yet we as a Nation have not engaged the neighbors of Iraq. We have not gone forward and tried to bring a settlement to this. We have not engaged Iran. We have not engaged Syria. We have just continued to send troops to Iraq. Something has to be done.

Today we took the first step to do that. I was proud to be one of the representatives who voted for the Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act, as were 223 of my other colleagues here. It is an important step that we have taken. It is an important step for this Congress.

You know, I can't help but think, I have two teenaged children. What are we going to tell our children about why we were in Iraq? When our grandchildren read the history books and say to us, ''Members of Congress, what did you do to stop this war,'' what are we going to tell them? Well, today we took one step in telling them that we began the process. We are beginning the process to bring this war to an end and to bring our troops home. It is necessary. It is important. It is our responsibility as Members of Congress.

Ms. SUTTON. I thank the gentleman for his poignant remarks. Your point is well taken when you talk about the benchmarks and the target moving. How many more times will we hear this administration argue that we are just about to make progress? And yet here we are, 4½ years later.

I would like to yield to the distinguished gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. COURTNEY).

Mr. COURTNEY. Thank you, I want to salute you for organizing this Special Order tonight on the very day where this new Congress rose to its constitutional duty and stood up for the American people who made a watershed historic change last November in terms of expecting us as Members of Congress to lead the way to a new direction in Iraq. The vote again today followed a succession which all of us here as new Members have been part of. I think it is fitting that we are here to discuss that change as the people who really made a difference in terms of changing control of this body.

The vote today was, as members of the Armed Services Committee and Ms.

SHEA-PORTER knows this, was all about what has happened to the military readiness of this country.

Chairman SKELTON is a passionate believer that this war has almost destroyed the ground forces of this country, the Army and the Marines. This was driven home to me during the July 4 recess. A young man, Army-enlist soldier, came to our district office. In one hand, he had his orders for redeployment, his fourth redeployment to Iraq. He had been to Iraq for two 1-year stints, and an additional stint of 7 months in Afghanistan. So over 4 years, 2 year and 7 months, he has been in a combat zone and barely been home for any rest time.

In his other hand, he had a bag filled with prescription medicine for anti-anxiety conditions. Zoloft was one of his prescriptions, which is a very serious medication for that type of condition. Yet we have a situation where he is being sent for the fourth time back into a combat zone. Luckily, our office was able to arrange for him to be seen by a psychiatrist, and a report was prepared which showed that he had full-blown post-traumatic stress, and we are making arrangements with the Army to ensure that he is not sent back into that situation.

But that is the dirty little secret about this surge policy, that we are forcing people who are not physically fit because they are not getting adequate rest time at home and, in many cases, who are mentally ill and being sent back into combat zone because of the taxing of our Armed Forces. It has reached the point where they have no other choice but to try and send people who again are well outside any normal guidelines in terms of rest, training and equipment which the Army has set up.

This bill today which we voted on and passed by an ever-increasing margin with each succeeding vote here, is an attempt to say as a Nation and as a Congress, which has the constitutional duty to raise the Armed Forces, that we have a duty to change course in Iraq to ensure that we have Armed Forces that are capable of addressing the real national security interests of this country.

□ 2330

Certainly being in the middle of a civil war in Iraq is not consistent with the national security interests of this country.

As Congresswoman SHEA-PORTER pointed out today, the front page of the Washington Post has pointed out that al Qaeda now has reached the level of strength that it had before the events of 9/11, that there are training camps in Pakistan that have been allowed to flourish because our eye was taken off the ball with the invasion of Iraq when we should have finished the job in Afghanistan back in 2002 and 2003.

We are now in a situation, as Mr. ARCURI just said, we are, in fact, as exposed and as vulnerable as this country was at the time of September 11 because of the outrageous, misguided policies of this administration.

This bill, which we voted on today, which sets out a very measured, responsible policy that will change course in Iraq, I think answers all the questions of the doubters and the cynics that we don't have an answer for what happens after a change of course that occurs in Iraq. This is not about Vietnam revisited where people are going to be evacuated in helicopters.

This bill lays out a responsible plan for real change in Iraq that addresses the need to approach this problem on a regional basis in the Middle East and reintroduces a diplomatic measure that has been sorely lacking in terms of this administration's policy over the last four-and-a-half years.

So, again, I think as new Members who are part of the new majority that have helped revive life in this branch of the government, which was a near rubber stamp over the last 4 years, it is important that I think we are here tonight to reemphasize what took place here in this chamber and to restate our mission to keep faith with the voters that took place last fall and make sure that we have a real change in policy in Iraq.

I'd like to yield now to Congressman ELLISON from the State of Minnesota who's again part of this new majority here in Congress.

Mr. ELLISON. Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm always happy to join my colleagues, the difference-makers, who heard the call of the American people and came to Congress to really make the case for a safer America, a stronger America; an America that is not mired down in the quagmire which is Iraq; an America that says, look, we are ready to defend American interest around the world, but that does not include being mired down in a war we never should have been in in the first place.

I'm proud to have voted for this safe redeployment act today, but I just want to point out something that's so very important; and that is, that while dollars and cents clearly are important in this debate, no one can calculate the loss of a loved one. Since this surge began, 600 families have received the most devastating news that any family can ever receive, 600 spouses, 600 sets of parents, 600 sets of children, 600 communities lost a loved one because of this surge that was wrong-headed from the very beginning.

We can't calculate the costs of this war in dollars really. It must be calculated in terms of the lives of our fellow Americans that have gone forward in this horrible conflict. We have to calculate this war in terms of the injuries and the casualties that have been faced, in terms of the young people who have lost limbs, who have lost their strong sense of mental health, their ability to discern reality, their ability to have a calm frame of mind because, for so many of these young people, the helicopter sounds don't stop even after they come home. For so many young people, the explosions, a car backing up, any sort of sound sends them back to that war zone they used to be in. And it's a horrible tragedy, it's a human tragedy, and no amount of calculation of dollars and cents will ever truly capture what we have lost as a Nation.

So, Mr. Speaker, as we stand here, the difference-makers, today we want to state to the American people that we are here to keep the faith with the American people. We will never forget all of our fellow Americans, our brothers and sisters who have gone forward in this conflict, who have lost lives, who have lost limbs, who have lost their health and their families, who have received an injury that is so impossible to ever heal from. But we know the resilience and the strength of the American people, and we know that they expect us to put their best interests first forward always, and that means a safe, responsible redeployment out of this conflict.

So, Mr. Speaker, just as I say that the losses in this war cannot simply be calculated in dollars and cents but in terms of real human lives, it is also true that they be calculated in dollars and cents as well.

And before I yield back, Mr. Speaker, I just want to point out this very important graph that I have right to my right, and this shows very clearly the costs of this war. It wasn't the $8 billion that we thought it was.

Now, we know it's 10 billion per month, but just look here. Per year we're talking about a number with so many zeros behind it I think that my young children will be very hard pressed to be able to pronounce this number. This is a huge number. What is this, this number is about 120 T, trillion? Billion. I think I need an arithmetic lesson, and I'm a fellow that's had a little bit of schooling.

But as I look at this big number, it will be a challenge for any fifth grader, Mr. Speaker. It's a whopper of a number and it can't even begin to calculate the true losses of our country in this war.

Mr. ARCURI. Just a point that I'd like to make on something that you said earlier, if you could comment on that.

We talk about money costs, but think of the amount of money that this Congress has had to appropriate for veterans benefits as a result of the staggering injuries, the staggering effects that this war has had on our veterans and on our military personnel, and I just think that that's something that I don't think that this administration thought about when they planned out Iraq. They didn't think about the number of wounded because, while our medical teams get better and better, we save many more lives, but obviously many, many more people receive injuries that they will suffer from the rest of their lives. And it's our duty and our responsibility as a Nation to take care

of those individuals, and the emotional costs to their family and obviously financial cost to this country of taking care of them is great.

And I just wanted to add that because that's something else that I don't think anyone thought about before we went into Iraq.

Mr. ELLISON. No doubt, Mr. Speaker. That's an excellent point. What does it mean to care for a 20-year-old quadriplegic for the course of his or her life?

This chart speaks for itself, but I just want to go to the bottom line if I may, Mr. Speaker. We're looking at $3,816 per second.

Ms. SUTTON. I thank the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. ELLISON), and the points raised are worth talking about. He's absolutely right when we talk about the loss of life, the irretrievable loss of life as being the real cost, the real measure of our loss.

Not too long ago during this surge, the escalation of this war, within this past 6 months, I had the very sad experience of I'm sure that many of you have had of going back to my district to go to visitation, to calling hours, for a fallen soldier. And on this occasion, I walked in and I was taken aback because family members, they thank you. They thank you for coming to pay your respects to this one who was willing to give it all for his country.

And as I walked in and I walked over to the casket where this brave soldier lay and there he was, this young man, and I kneeled down and I looked and I looked long and I looked hard because I wanted to remember and I wanted to feel all that I could so that when I came back here to cast the votes that we must cast and to make the decisions that we must make about the lives that are in our hands, to answer the questions about what we're willing to ask them to do and what we're willing to protect them from, I wanted that to be a part of who I am and the decisions I make.

So I carried that with me, and I carried it with me for the vote today, but I can't help but also share a very disappointing moment that happened later that day when I returned home, to hear the news and our President talking about how much he enjoyed riding his bike and how we should all ride our bikes because it's a healthy thing to do. Well, maybe so, but it struck me that this President, to my knowledge, doesn't go to many of those calling hours, and perhaps it would be different and perhaps the decision-making would be different because you're right, my colleague from Minnesota, the lives lost are irretrievable.

With that, I'd like to yield to the gentleman from New Hampshire (Mr. HODES), who has joined us again.

Mr. HODES. Thank you. It's very moving, as we stand here, to think about the real impact, the effects of this misbegotten war on the people of this country. The war is a cancer on the body politic that it is our job to deal with. It's unfortunate.

We were sent to Congress, those of us who are here, largely to serve as catalysts for change. The legislation we passed today is that beginning, and I recall standing here where I'm now standing in the well of the House of Representatives a few weeks ago to welcome to this chamber men and women who had recently served their country, who were coming from Walter Reed, who had come from other military hospitals where, as my friend from New York Mr. ARCURI points out, the costs of dealing with the traumatic injuries that have been inflicted on more than 25,000 people in this war have not even begun to be calculated on the chart next to me. They run into so much money that the mind cannot grapple with it.

These brave men and women came to the floor. They came on crutches. They came in wheelchairs. And each one is a story of bravery and of sadness for me because I saw people whose lives were shattered, people without one leg, people without two legs, people without two legs and a arm, people without two legs and an arm, with traumatic brain injuries, and veterans in addition to the active duty wounded warriors who came here to meet Members of Congress and talk to us about the difficulties they were having in their lives, veterans for whom the Veterans Administration was not responsive, and we have dealt as a new Democratic majority with those issues as well.

I tried to think of what I could say. There was one soldier who sat in the front row with a young lady, it was his wife or his fiancé, who wanted to talk to us about what was really happening in Iraq. And he started by saying, I have three things to tell you. He said, number one, they're not telling you the real story about what's going on there. Number two, and he stopped because he'd forgotten number two. He couldn't get to it.

□ 2245

He had traumatic brain injury. I ask myself, what will it take for the President of this great country of ours, for those predominantly on the other side of the aisle who support a surge which has weakened our security, strengthened al Qaeda, weakened our military, continued the destruction of our reputation in the world; what will it take for this President to face the reality of what his policies have created, to come before the American people with courage and dignity and say, ''We have made some terrible mistakes, and it's time to correct them. We will change course, because I know it's the right thing to do. I know we must do it. We honor the service of all those who have served in this conflict. But now we will go and we will fight al Qaeda where we need to in Afghanistan and Pakistan. We will deal and set our strategy in the Middle East so that we can effectively deal with the threat of Iran, the threat posed by Syria, the threat posed by Hezbollah in Lebanon, the threats posed by Hamas and Fattah in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We will, once again, reassert our leadership in the world with the moral courage, with the principles and the values and the dignity that the American people expect. We will face up to our past mistakes, but we will lead into the future with a comprehensive strategy to protect American security''?

I am waiting. The American people are waiting. Congress is waiting.

Enough name calling. We are all in this together. This is not a Republican or a Democratic issue. The comprehensive strategy that we have adopted today is an American issue that will move us forward. The real honor that this President and those who oppose a new direction can do to those brave men and women who came to this floor shattered is to acknowledge the past mistakes and move forward to strengthen America and protect us all.

Ms. SUTTON. It reminds me of a committee hearing yesterday, and we heard some discussion from one of the witnesses about courage. It was used in the context, you have to have the courage to go forward. Sometimes it takes courage to go forward.

I know that Mr. ARCURI and I together looked at each other, and thought sometimes it takes the courage that you spoke of, Mr. HODES, to admit when things aren't going right and changing direction. That is the kind of direction that we need in this country from our President, that we need for our troops from our President.

Mr. COURTNEY. One day last week, this past week, in Hartford, Connecticut, General Eric Shinseki came and spoke the to World Affairs Council in Hartford. He, speaking of courage, was the chief of the Army at the outset of the Iraq war, was asked the question by the Armed Services Committee, how many forces it would take to secure Iraq after the invasion. He said, hundreds of thousands of troops.

As we all know, what happened to him was that because the neoconservatives to dominated the administration at the time didn't want to hear that type of reality; instead, they were wedded to this view, that you could win the war on the cheap.

He was bounced out of the Army, after an incredibly distinguished career, decorated combat veteran in Vietnam, one of the people who did an incredible amount of work to bring our Armed Forces back after the debacle of Vietnam.

He spoke to the World Affairs Council on Monday and talked about what happened in the wake of Vietnam in terms of our Armed Forces, that the disillusionment and, you know, just the negative fallout that occurred in terms of people enlisting in the Army, departing well before their planned careers were going to actually come to fruition, caused great damage to the Armed Forces that took decades to recover, and that we as a Nation had finally gotten to a point where we had

not just people at the top level but also at the middle levels of the Army who had really gotten a strong, competent force back into place. His concern is that this war in Iraq is going to result in the same damage as an institution to the Army and the Marine Corps.

We are seeing it in terms of people departing the service, the mid-level officer corps. We again saw another example where the Army failed to hit its recruiting goals last month.

This bill today that we voted on was all about trying to repair the damage that has been done to the military readiness of this country, and General Shinseki, who I think will go down in history as a prophet in this country, as hopefully somebody who still has service to give to this Nation, maybe in a new administration some time or in some other role, is reminding us that we are at grave risk.

Again, the quality people, I know we saw it in Iraq when we went and visited, just wonderful, wonderful people serving in uniform in Iraq, helpful, smart, independent minded. But right now they are trapped in a policy by the administration that is basically telling them that their service is just being used in a way that shows no respect for their own wonderful qualities.

It is one of the main, most important reasons that this bill today that we voted on has got to get passed and signed into law. We have got to keep chipping away with vote after vote over the next few weeks or so to make sure that the gathering numbers we are picking up on these measures are going to get us to the point where real change is going to happen.

Ms. SUTTON. I would just ask the gentlewoman from New Hampshire to add to that, because I know that you hear a great deal in your role as a member of the Armed Services Committee. That is a point that is important for people to know about one of the consequences of this continuing path that we are going down in Iraq.

Ms. SHEA-PORTER. It's very important. I sit on the Armed Services Committee and the Subcommittees on Personnel and Readiness. So I hear every day what the President's impact has had on personnel and on readiness. I would like to address both of them.

Supporting the troops is a lot more than putting a yellow ribbon on a car. The ''Support the Troops'' sound coming out of the White House rings hollow to my ears after 6 months on the Armed Services Committee. I will give you an example. Here we have the most wonderful troops in the world, committed volunteers who signed up out of love and patriotism for their country. It came time for a pay raise, and the President only wanted 3 percent.

The House of Representatives, bipartisan, said they wanted 3.5 percent pay raise. So, how much is 3.5 percent versus the President's percent? Well for an E–4, it would be $200 a year. I know, from sitting on the Personnel Subcommittee, what a strain this is on their families and the cost of having a loved one gone and having to get day care and having to get extra help and not having the same support system that they have when they have their spouse or family member with them.

Yet the President said 3 percent was sufficient. He was angry enough, when the House voted for a 3.5 percent pay raise, that he listed it as one of the reasons that he would consider vetoing the bill. If you can't give an E–4, who is serving his or her country, $200 a year, then all the talk you want about supporting the troops is hollow, and it really ranks sour for the rest of us.

You look at readiness, and you realize the Army has been so impacted by this, that I actually voted to grow the size of the Army. I also voted for the largest, we all did, the largest military budget in history.

As a direct result of the President's misguided policy, he has left us in such a weakened state around the world, that we have to grow the size of the Army. We have to put more incentives in there, and we have to put the largest budget in there.

You know, we do have enemies in this world. We know that. We have a lot of enemies. They weren't in Iraq, but we do have enemies.

Peter Pace, a general, was asked if he were comfortable with the ability of the United States to respond to an emerging threat around the world. He paused for a moment, and he said, no, I'm not comfortable. That should frighten all of us.

If the general doesn't feel that we could respond to an emerging threat because all of our resources and all of our treasure and all of our people are planted inside of Iraq, we have a real problem. This is why we had to have that vote today, and this is why we need to get out of this war.

You know, I have been very disturbed by the way it has been treated like a political issue. It's not.

The freshman class that came here to make the change have been going to Iraq at great personal risk to themselves to have a look and to be sure that they are right about their position against this war. One by one we have come back, as you know, and said, no, we were right about this. What we saw was horrific. We saw a very sad, destroyed country. We saw a country at war with itself in Iraq, and we saw our troops stuck in the middle of the civil war.

Fortunately, there are some Republicans who are now breaking away from the President's grip and speaking the truth about this war. I just wanted to read a couple of them. I will leave their names out, because who they are is not important, except to say that they are Senators.

Here's one, ''We need to be fighting terrorists, not civil wars . . . Iraq's peace is one they must win on their own. We cannot win it for them. Our might should be focused on stopping terrorists who are plotting to bring harm to the United States.''

Here is another Republican Senator, ''A policy of responsible military disengagement with a corresponding increase [in] nonmilitary support is the best way to advance our Nation's interests.''

Another one, ''There's nothing to wait for. Almost everybody that has any knowledge of the reports . . . would indicate they are not going to show any degree of a big change that we needed. So we are just wasting time.''

If we are going to fight terrorism, first of all, we need to protect our own homeland.

You know, if you know there is a burglar in the neighborhood, first thing you do is lock your own door. We didn't do that. If you look at the little money we have invested in Homeland Security, you will know that we are no safer than we were before 9/11, that we took the money and we went to Iraq.

Now why did we go to Iraq? I guess that's the question that hangs in everybody's mind. There were no Iraqis on the plane that day. There was no evidence that Iraq was ready to attack us. We were misled, misguided, got into this war. What's happened to us? Are we safer here? No, of course not.

Are we in more danger there? Yes. Have we destabilized the region? Yes. Do we have to worry about growth of al Qaeda? Yes.

However, the good news is, yesterday at a hearing on global security, there was a Member of the CIA and a couple of others who spoke, and they said that we do not have to fear Iran's sway over Iraq.

Let's remember, Iran and Iraq were bitter enemies who fought an 8-year war. They are not natural allies. They are only allies right now because of us. Once we leave, it's my fervent hope and belief that it will calm down.

Ms. SUTTON. I would like to turn to the gentleman from New York, because I know he has something important to add.

Mr. ARCURI. Let me say thank you, again, to my friend from Ohio for organizing this.

Let me just say, I hear throughout this debate, victory, victory, victory. The other side constantly talks about victory. But to my way of thinking, victory is long past.

What victory means at this time would be bringing as many of our troops home alive and safe as we possibly can. That's what victory means. That's what we should be trying to achieve, and that's what today was all about. I think that really is the most important thing that I think we achieved today.

Ms. SUTTON. It really is. Today was the day we passed the Responsible Redeployment From Iraq Act. It is about achieving that victory. We ask that the President join us in trying to take this into a different direction, a better direction for the country, for our troops.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. CONYERS (at the request of Mr. HOYER) for today after 3:00 p.m.

SPECIAL ORDERS GRANTED

By unanimous consent, permission to address the House, following the legislative program and any special orders heretofore entered, was granted to:

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. MCNULTY) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Ms. WATERS, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. DELAURO, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. WOOLSEY, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. LEE, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. TOWNS, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. KLEIN of Florida, for 5 minutes, today.

Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. KAPTUR, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. DEFAZIO, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. JEFFERSON, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. SCHIFF, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. HALL of New York, for 5 minutes, today.

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. ROHRABACHER) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. JONES of North Carolina, for 5 minutes, July 19.

Mr. MCCAUL of Texas, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. FORTENBERRY, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. ROHRABACHER, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. MCCOTTER, for 5 minutes, today.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. SUTTON. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 11 o'clock and 59 minutes p.m.), under its previous order, the House adjourned until tomorrow, Friday, July 13, 2007, at 4 p.m.

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, ETC.

Under clause 8 of rule XII, executive communications were taken from the Speaker's table and referred as follows:

2435. A letter from the Congressional Review Coordinator, Department of Agriculture, transmitting the Department's final rule — Asian Longhorned Beetle; Removal of Quarantined Area in Illinois [Docket No. APHIS-2006-0105] received July 9, 2007, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

2436. A letter from the Congressional Review Coordinator, Department of Agriculture, transmitting the Department's final rule — Cold Treatment Regulations [Docket No. APHIS-2006-0050] received July 9, 2007, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

2437. A letter from the Principal Deputy Associate Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule — Indoxacarb; Pesticide Tolerance [EPA-HQ-OPP-2005-0149; FRL-8137-8] received July 10, 2007, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

2438. A letter from the Principal Deputy Associate Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule — Cymoxanil; Pesticide Tolerance [EPA-HQ-OPP-2006-0331; FRL-8130-5] received July 10, 2007, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

2439. A letter from the Principal Deputy Associate Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule — Chlorpropham, Linuron, Pebulate, Asulam, and Thiophanate-methyl; Tolerance Actions [EPA-HQ-OPP-2006-0483.; FRL-8131-6] received July 10, 2007, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

2440. A letter from the Acting Deputy Administrator, Agency for International Development, transmitting a report of a violation of the Anti-Deficiency Act which occurred in the Agency for International Development, pursuant to 31 U.S.C. 1517(b); to the Committee on Appropriations.

2441. A letter from the Comptroller, Department of Defense, transmitting a report of a violation of the Antideficiency Act, Case Number 04-02, pursuant to 31 U.S.C. 1517(b); to the Committee on Appropriations.

2442. A letter from the Chief Counsel, FEMA, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting the Department's final rule — Changes in Flood Elevation Determinations [Docket No. FEMA-B-7703] received July 9, 2007, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Financial Services.

2443. A letter from the Deputy Director, Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation, transmitting the Corporation's final rule — Benefits Payable in Terminated Single-Employer Plans; Allocation of Assets in Single-Employer Plans; Interest Assumptions for Valuing and Paying Benefits — received July 9, 2007, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Education and Labor.

2444. A letter from the Director, Regulations Poilcy and Mgmt. Staff, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting the Department's final rule — Human Cells, Tissues, and Cellular and Tissue-Based Products; Donor Screening and Testing, and Related Labeling [Docket No. 1997N-0484T] received July 9, 2007, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

2445. A letter from the Regulations Coordinator, CMS, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting the Department's ''Major'' final rule — Medicaid Program; Citizenship Documentation Requirements [CMS-2557-F] (RIN: 0938-AO51) received July 9, 2007, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

2446. A letter from the Principal Deputy Associate Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule — Revisions to the Arizona State Implementation Plan, Pinal County Air Quality Control District [EPA-R09-OAR-2006-0729; FRL-8439-2] received July 10, 2007, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

2447. A letter from the Principal Deputy Associate Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule — Criteria for the Safe and Environmentally Protective Use of Granular Mine Tailings known as ''Chat'' [EPA-HQ-RCRA-2006-0097; FRL-8326-1] (RIN: 2050-AG-27) received July 10, 2007, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

2448. A letter from the Principal Deputy Associate Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule — Approval and Promulgation of State Air Quality Plans for Designated Facilities and Pollutants; Delaware, and West Virginia; Control of Emissions from Existing Other Solid Waste Incinerator Units [EPA-R03-OAR-2007-0354; [FRL-8338-7]] received July 10, 2007, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

2449. A letter from the Principal Deputy Associate Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule — Approval and Promulgation of Air Quality Implementation Plans; Virginia; Update to Materials Incorporated by Reference [VA201-5201; FRL-8336-1] received July 10, 2007, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

2450. A letter from the Director, International Cooperation, Department of Defense, transmitting Pursuant to Section 27(f) of the Arms Export Control Act and Section 1(f) of Executive Order 11958, Transmittal No. 06-07 informing of an intent to sign Research, Development, Test and Evaluation (RDT&E) Projects Memorandum of Understanding between the United States and the Republic of Korea, pursuant to 22 U.S.C. 2767(f); to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

2451. A letter from the Assistant Legal Adviser for Treaty Affairs, Department of State, transmitting Copies of international agreements, other than treaties, entered into by the United States, pursuant to 1 U.S.C. 112b; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

2452. A letter from the Director, Defense Security Cooperation Agency, transmitting pursuant to section 36(b)(5)(A) of the Arms Export Control Act, relating to enhancements and upgrades from the level of sensitivity of technology or capability described in the Section 36(b)(1) AECA certification 06-70 of 27 September 2006 (Transmittal No. 0A-07); to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

2453. A letter from the Director, Defense Security Cooperation Agency, transmitting pursuant to Section 62(a) of the Arms Export Control Act (AECA), notification concerning the Department of the Navy's proposed lease of defense articles to the Government of France (Transmittal No. 01-07); to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

2454. A letter from the Deputy Director, Defense Security Cooperation Agency, transmitting pursuant to the reporting requirements of Section 36(b)(1) of the Arms Export Control Act, as amended, Transmittal No. 07-27, concerning the Department of the Army's proposed Letter(s)of Offer and Acceptance to Brazil for defense articles and services; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

2455. A letter from the Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting pursuant to section 36(c) and (d) of the Arms Export Control Act, certification regarding the proposed technical assistance agreement for the export of defense services, including technical data, and defense services to the Republic of Korea (Transmittal No. DDTC 044-07); to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

2456. A letter from the Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting pursuant to section 36(c) and (d) of the Arms Export Control Act, certification regarding the proposed manufacturing license agreement for the manufacture of significant military equipment abroad with the Government of Germany (Transmittal No. DDTC 018-07); to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

2457. A letter from the Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting pursuant to section 36(c) and (d) of the Arms Export Control Act, certification regarding the proposed manufacturing license agreement for the manufacture of significant military equipment abroad to the Republic of Korea (Transmittal No. DDTC 054-07); to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

2458. A letter from the Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting pursuant to section 36(d) of the Arms Export Control Act, certification regarding the proposed manufacturing license agreement for the manufacture of significant military equipment with the Government of Japan (Transmittal No. DDTC 040-07); to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

2459. A letter from the Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting pursuant to section 36(d) of the Arms Export Control Act, certification regarding the proposed manufacturing license agreement for the manufacture of significant military equipment with the Government of Japan (Transmittal No. DDTC 011-07); to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

2460. A letter from the Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting pursuant to section 36(d) of the Arms Export Control Act, certification regarding the proposed manufacturing license agreement for the manufacture of significant military equipment with the Government of Norway (Transmittal No. DDTC 021-07); to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

2461. A letter from the Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting pursuant to section 36(c) of the Arms Export Control Act, certification regarding the proposed license for the export of defense articles to the Government of Colombia (Transmittal No. DDTC 038-07); to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

2462. A letter from the Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting pursuant to section 36(c) of the Arms Export Control Act, certification regarding the proposed license for the export of defense articles and services to the Government of Israel (Transmittal No. DDTC 056-07); to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

2463. A letter from the Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting pursuant to section 36(c) of the Arms Export Control Act, certification regarding the proposed license for the export of defense articles and services to the Government of Pakistan (Transmittal No. DDTC 025-07); to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

2464. A letter from the Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting pursuant to section 36(c) of the Arms Export Control Act, certification regarding the proposed license for the export of defense articles and services to the Government of the United Arab Emirates (Transmittal No. DDTC 017-07); to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

2465. A letter from the Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting pursuant to section 36(c) of the Arms Export Control Act, certification regarding the proposed license for the export of major defense equipment and defense articles to the Commonwealth of Australia (Transmittal No. DDTC 041-07); to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

2466. A letter from the Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting pursuant to section 36(c) of the Arms Export Control Act, certification regarding the proposed technical assistance agreement for the export of technical data, defense services, and defense articles with the Government of Israel (Transmittal No. DDTC 015-07); to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

2467. A letter from the Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting pursuant to section 36(c) of the Arms Export Control Act, re-certification of the proposed manufacturing license agreement for the manufacture of defense articles with the Government of Japan (Transmittal No. DDTC 028-07); to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

2468. A letter from the Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting pursuant to section 36(c) of the Arms Export Control Act, certification of a proposed amendment to a license for the export of defense articles and services to the Government of Canada (Transmittal No. DDTC 027-07); to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

2469. A letter from the Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting pursuant to section 36(c) of the Arms Export Control Act, certification regarding the proposed technical assistance agreement for defense services to the Commonwealth of Australia (Transmittal No. DDTC 023-07); to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

2470. A letter from the Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting pursuant to section 3(d) of the Arms Export Control Act, certification regarding the proposed transfer of major defense equipment from the Government of Norway (Transmittal No. RSAT-10-06); to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

2471. A letter from the Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting pursuant to section 3(d) of the Arms Export Control Act, certification regarding the proposed transfer of major defense equipment from the Government of Jordan (Transmittal No. RSAT-02-07); to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

2472. A letter from the Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting a copy a determination made pursuant to Section 1306 of the National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2003, Pub. L. 107-314; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

2473. A letter from the Chairman, Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting a copy of D.C. ACT 17-70, ''Safe and Stable Homes for Children and Youth Amendment Act of 2007,'' pursuant to D.C. Code section 1-233(c)(1); to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

2474. A letter from the Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, NMFS, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, transmitting the Administration's final rule — Atlantic Highly Migratory Species; Atlantic Bluefin Tuna Fisheries (RIN: 0648-XA57) received June 18, 2007, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Natural Resources.

2475. A letter from the Director, Statutory Import Programs Staff, Department of Commerce, transmitting the Department's final rule — Changes in the Insular Possessions Watch, Watch Movement and Jewelry Programs 2006 [Docket No. 0612243019-7062-02] (RIN: 0625-AA72) received July 10, 2007, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Ways and Means.

2476. A letter from the Regulations Coordinator, CMS, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting the Department's ''Major'' final rule — Medicaid Program; Prescription Drugs [CMS-2238-FC] (RIN: 0938-AO20) received July 9, 2007, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); jointly to the Committees on Energy and Commerce and Ways and Means.

2477. A letter from the Board Members, Railroad Retirement Board, transmitting the 2007 annual report on the financial status of the railroad unemployment insurance system, pursuant to 45 U.S.C. 369; jointly to the Committees on Transportation and Infrastructure and Ways and Means.

2478. A letter from the Board Members, Railroad Retirement Board, transmitting a report on the actuarial status of the railroad retirement system, including any recommendations for financing changes, pursuant to 45 U.S.C. 231f-1; jointly to the Committees on Ways and Means and Transportation and Infrastructure.

PUBLIC BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS

Under clause 2 of rule XII, public bills and resolutions were introduced and severally referred, as follows:

By Mr. BARROW (for himself and Mr. GRAVES):

H.R. 3009. A bill to enhance transparency of trading in over-the-counter derivatives in natural gas; to the Committee on Agriculture.

By Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia (for himself, Mr. BARROW, Mr. LEWIS of Georgia, Ms. SCHAKOWSKY, Mr. BRALEY of Iowa, Mr. CUMMINGS, Mr. GONZALEZ, Mr. COHEN, and Mr. ELLISON):

H.R. 3010. A bill to amend chapter 1 of title 9 of United States Code with respect to arbitration; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. TOWNS (for himself, Mr. HALL of Texas, and Mr. WHITFIELD):

H.R. 3011. A bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to ensure adequate payment amounts for drugs and biologicals under part B of the Medicare Program; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce, and in addition to the Committee on Ways and Means, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. BACHUS (for himself, Mr. GILLMOR, Ms. PRYCE of Ohio, Mr. GARY G. MILLER of California, and Mr. LATOURETTE):

H.R. 3012. A bill to amend the Truth in Lending Act to provide for the establishment of fair mortgage practices, generally, and for subprime mortgages in particular, to provide for a national system for licensing or registering residential mortgage loan originators, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Financial Services, and in addition to the Committee on the Judiciary, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. SCOTT of Virginia (for himself, Mr. FORBES, Mr. CONYERS, Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN of California, Mr. SMITH of Texas, Mr. DAVIS of Alabama, Mr. COBLE, Mr. FEENEY, and Mr. ROSKAM):

H.R. 3013. A bill to provide appropriate protection to attorney-client privileged communications and attorney work product; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Ms. SOLIS (for herself, Mr. ABERCROMBIE, Mr. BACA, Mr. BECERRA, Mr. BISHOP of Georgia, Ms. BORDALLO, Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida, Mr. BUTTERFIELD, Mr. CARDOZA, Ms. CARSON, Ms. CASTOR, Mrs. CHRISTENSEN, Ms. CLARKE, Mr. CLAY, Mr. CLEAVER, Mr. CLYBURN, Mr. CONYERS, Mr. COSTA, Mr. CROWLEY, Mr. CUELLAR, Mr. CUMMINGS, Mr. DAVIS of Alabama, Mr. DAVIS of Illinois, Mr. ELLISON, Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia, Mrs. JONES of Ohio, Mr. KILDEE, Ms. KILPATRICK, Ms. LEE, Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas, Mr. LEWIS of Georgia, Ms. MATSUI, Mr. MEEK of Florida, Mr.

MEEKS of New York, Ms. MOORE of Wisconsin, Mrs. NAPOLITANO, Ms. NORTON, Mr. ORTIZ, Mr. PASTOR, Mr. PAYNE, Mr. RANGEL, Mr. REYES, Mr. RUSH, Mr. RODRIGUEZ, Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN, Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD, Mr. SALAZAR, Mr. FATTAH, Mr. FORTUÑO, Mr. GONZALEZ, Mr. AL GREEN of Texas, Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas, Mr. GRIJALVA, Mr. HASTINGS of Florida, Mr. HINOJOSA, Mr. HONDA, Mr. HOYER, Mr. JACKSON of Illinois, Mr. JEFFERSON, Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas, Mr. SCOTT of Georgia, Mr. SCOTT of Virginia, Mr. SERRANO, Mr. SIRES, Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi, Mr. TOWNS, Ms. VELÁZQUEZ, Ms. WATERS, Ms. WATSON, Mr. WATT, and Mr. WYNN):

H.R. 3014. A bill to improve the health of minority individuals, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce, and in addition to the Committees on Ways and Means, Education and Labor, Natural Resources, and the Judiciary, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. CHABOT (for himself and Ms. VELÁZQUEZ):

H.R. 3015. A bill to delay the applicability to webcasters of rates and terms determined by the Copyright Royalty Judges for certain statutory licenses under title 17, United States Code; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Ms. BERKLEY (for herself, Mr. LEWIS of Kentucky, Mr. ABERCROMBIE, Mr. SHAYS, Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas, Mr. RAMSTAD, Ms. GRANGER, Mr. SENSENBRENNER, Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York, Ms. DEGETTE, Mrs. MUSGRAVE, Mr. CROWLEY, Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California, Mr. POMEROY, Mr. THOMPSON of California, Mr. BECERRA, and Mr. CARTER):

H.R. 3016. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to expand the tip tax credit to employers of cosmetologists and to promote tax compliance in the cosmetology sector; to the Committee on Ways and Means.

By Mrs. BIGGERT:

H.R. 3017. A bill to authorize additional appropriations for the Federal Bureau of Investigation to enhance its ability to more effectively stop mortgage fraud, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mrs. BIGGERT:

H.R. 3018. A bill to provide for payment of an administrative fee to public housing agencies to cover the costs of administering family self-sufficiency programs in connection with the housing choice voucher program of the Department of Housing and Urban Development; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mrs. BIGGERT:

H.R. 3019. A bill to establish an Office of Housing Counseling to carry out and coordinate the responsibilities of the Department of Housing and Urban Development regarding counseling on homeownership and rental housing issues, to make grants to entities for providing such counseling, to launch a national housing counseling advertising campaign, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Financial Services.

By Mr. CHABOT (for himself, Ms. VELÁZQUEZ, Mr. CUELLAR, Ms. CLARKE, and Mr. LIPINSKI):

H.R. 3020. A bill to amend the Small Business Act to improve the Microloan program, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Small Business.

By Mr. CHANDLER (for himself, Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California, and Mr. KILDEE):

H.R. 3021. A bill to direct the Secretary of Education to make grants and low-interest loans to local educational agencies for the construction, modernization, or repair of public kindergarten, elementary, and secondary educational facilities, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Education and Labor.

By Mr. COSTA (for himself and Mr. NUNES):

H.R. 3022. A bill to designate the John Krebs Wilderness in the State of California, to add certain land to the Sequoia-Kings Canyon National Park Wilderness, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Natural Resources.

By Mr. DEFAZIO (for himself, Mr. STARK, Mr. WAXMAN, Mr. CHANDLER, and Mr. HINCHEY):

H.R. 3023. A bill to require the manufacturers, packers, and distributors of prescription drugs and medical devices to disclose certain gifts provided in connection with detailing, promotional, or other marketing activities, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

By Ms. DEGETTE (for herself, Mr. SALAZAR, Mrs. CAPPS, and Mr. TIM MURPHY of Pennsylvania):

H.R. 3024. A bill to amend titles XIX and XXI of the Social Security Act to provide States with the option to provide nurse home visitation services under Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Program; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

By Mr. DOGGETT (for himself, Mr. ACKERMAN, Mr. ALLEN, Mr. BECERRA, Mr. BERMAN, Mrs. CAPPS, Mr. COHEN, Mr. DAVIS of Illinois, Ms. DELAURO, Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas, Mr. ELLISON, Mr. EMANUEL, Mr. ENGEL, Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts, Mr. AL GREEN of Texas, Mr. GRIJALVA, Mr. GUTIERREZ, Mr. HINCHEY, Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas, Ms. KAPTUR, Mr. KENNEDY, Mr. LARSON of Connecticut, Mr. LEWIS of Georgia, Mrs. LOWEY, Mrs. MALONEY of New York, Ms. MATSUI, Ms. MCCOLLUM of Minnesota, Mr. MCDERMOTT, Mr. MCGOVERN, Mr. MCNULTY, Mr. MICHAUD, Ms. MOORE of Wisconsin, Mr. MORAN of Virginia, Mr. NADLER, Mr. NEAL of Massachusetts, Ms. NORTON, Mr. ORTIZ, Mr. RUPPERSBERGER, Ms. SCHAKOWSKY, Mr. SCOTT of Virginia, Mr. STARK, Mr. WEINER, and Mr. WYNN):

H.R. 3025. A bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to provide comprehensive improvements to the Medicare Prescription Drug Program, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce, and in addition to the Committee on Ways and Means, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mrs. DRAKE:

H.R. 3026. A bill to authorize the Military Spouse Legacy Association, Inc., to establish a commemorative work on Federal land in the District of Columbia and its environs to honor all those who have put their country first as military spouses throughout our Nation's history; to the Committee on Natural Resources.

By Mr. ELLISON:

H.R. 3027. A bill to amend title 18, United States Code, to require the electronic recording of custodial interrogations in Federal criminal cases; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. FORTENBERRY (for himself, Mr. PAYNE, and Mr. SMITH of New Jersey):

H.R. 3028. A bill to end the use of child soldiers in hostilities around the world, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

By Mr. GRIJALVA (for himself, Mr. CAMPBELL of California, Mr. CONYERS, Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California, Mr. FARR, Mr. FORTENBERRY, Ms. SCHAKOWSKY, Mr. GUTIERREZ, Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York, Mr. SERRANO, Ms. DELAURO, Mr. KUCINICH, Mr. LEWIS of Georgia, Mr. NADLER, Mr. UDALL of Colorado, Mr. RANGEL, Mr. HINCHEY, and Mr. DAVIS of Illinois):

H.R. 3029. A bill to conserve global bear populations by prohibiting the importation, exportation, and interstate trade of bear viscera and items, products, or substances containing, or labeled or advertised as containing, bear viscera, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Natural Resources, and in addition to the Committees on Foreign Affairs, and Ways and Means, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Ms. HOOLEY:

H.R. 3030. A bill to amend the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act to improve the summer food service program for children; to the Committee on Education and Labor.

By Mr. INSLEE (for himself, Mr. WEINER, Ms. SCHAKOWSKY, and Mr. GRIJALVA):

H.R. 3031. A bill to promote the construction of green buildings in the United States, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce, and in addition to the Committees on Transportation and Infrastructure, Education and Labor, Oversight and Government Reform, Financial Services, and Ways and Means, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. JONES of North Carolina:

H.R. 3032. A bill to amend the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971 to permit candidates for election for Federal office to designate an individual who will be authorized to disburse funds of the authorized campaign committees of the candidate in the event of the death of the candidate; to the Committee on House Administration.

By Mrs. MALONEY of New York (for herself and Mr. TOWNS):

H.R. 3033. A bill to improve Federal agency awards and oversight of contracts and assistance and to strengthen accountability of the Government-wide suspension and debarment system; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

By Mr. MOORE of Kansas (for himself, Mrs. BOYDA of Kansas, Mr. MORAN of Kansas, and Mr. TIAHRT):

H.R. 3034. A bill to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 127 South Elm Street in Gardner, Kansas, as the ''Private First Class Shane R. Austin Post Office''; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

By Mr. PAYNE (for himself, Mr. PORTER, and Mr. BILIRAKIS):

H.R. 3035. A bill to award a Congressional Gold Medal to Jerry Lewis in recognition of his outstanding service to the Nation; to the Committee on Financial Services.

By Mr. SARBANES:

H.R. 3036. A bill to amend the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 regarding environmental education, and for other

purposes; to the Committee on Education and Labor.

By Ms. SCHWARTZ:

H.R. 3037. A bill to ensure that all Federal agencies consider the environmentally preferable features and practices of a vendor in purchases of meeting and conference services; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

By Mr. SESSIONS:

H.R. 3038. A bill to amend section 1848 of the Social Security Act to establish standards for growth in Medicare expenditures for physicians' services based on categories of services; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce, and in addition to the Committee on Ways and Means, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. SMITH of Nebraska (for himself, Mr. LINDER, Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland, Mr. LAMBORN, Mr. BISHOP of Utah, Mr. BRADY of Texas, Mr. PEARCE, Mr. KLINE of Minnesota, Mr. CAMPBELL of California, Mr. GINGREY, Mr. PITTS, Mr. MARCHANT, Mr. AKIN, Mr. HERGER, Mr. PRICE of Georgia, Mr. WILSON of South Carolina, Mr. SHADEGG, and Mr. MCCARTHY of California):

H.R. 3039. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to increase the time that taxpayers may use to make a tax-free exchange of like kind property; to the Committee on Ways and Means.

By Mr. SPACE:

H.R. 3040. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide additional educational assistance under the Montgomery GI Bill to veterans pursuing a degree in science, technology, engineering, or math; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, and in addition to the Committee on Armed Services, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. STUPAK (for himself and Mr. RUSH):

H.R. 3041. A bill to amend title XIX of the Social Security Act to reduce the costs of prescription drugs for enrollees of Medicaid managed care organizations by extending the discounts offered under fee-for-service Medicaid to such organizations; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

By Mr. THOMPSON of California (for himself, Mr. RAMSTAD, Mr. MCNULTY, Mr. MARSHALL, Mr. HOLDEN, and Mr. FARR):

H.R. 3042. A bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to extend for 6 months the eligibility period for the ''Welcome to Medicare'' physical examination and to eliminate coinsurance for screening mammography and colorectal cancer screening tests in order to promote the early detection of cancer; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce, and in addition to the Committee on Ways and Means, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. DEAL of Georgia (for himself, Mr. BAIRD, Mr. CASTLE, Mr. UPTON, Mr. WESTMORELAND, Mr. GINGREY, and Mr. MILLER of North Carolina):

H. Con. Res. 182. Concurrent resolution recognizing the need to pursue research into the causes, a treatment, and an eventual cure for idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis, supporting the goals and ideals of National Idiopathic Pulmonary Fibrosis Awareness Week, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

By Mr. HASTINGS of Florida (for himself, Mr. MCCOTTER, and Mr. ACKERMAN):

H. Con. Res. 183. Concurrent resolution calling on the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan to immediately release Farhad Aliyev and Rafiq Aliyev from detention during trial, to assure that their right to a fair and open trial before an independent and impartial tribunal will be carried out, and to comply with all its international human rights agreements and commitments respecting the rule of law, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

By Mr. SALI:

H. Con. Res. 184. Concurrent resolution expressing the sense of the Congress opposing removal of dams on the Columbia and Snake Rivers for fishery restoration purposes, supporting the renewable energy that the dams produce, and agreeing that their removal does not make sound environmental nor fiscal sense; to the Committee on Natural Resources, and in addition to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. EMANUEL:

H. Res. 540. A resolution electing a Member to a certain standing committee of the House of Representatives; considered and agreed to.

By Mr. TERRY (for himself, Mr. CONAWAY, Mr. LOBIONDO, Mr. SAXTON, Mr. CUMMINGS, Mr. COLE of Oklahoma, Mr. HALL of Texas, Mr. ORTIZ, Mrs. BOYDA of Kansas, Mr. LAMBORN, Ms. FALLIN, Mr. KUHL of New York, Mr. CALVERT, Mr. WESTMORELAND, Mr. ADERHOLT, Mr. BOUSTANY, Mr. WILSON of South Carolina, and Mr. CANNON):

H. Res. 541. A resolution recognizing the Marines of Company M (or ''Mike Company'') of the 3rd Battalion, 7th Regiment, 1st Marine Division on the occasion of their 25th Annual Reunion; to the Committee on Armed Services.

By Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida:

H. Res. 542. A resolution expressing the unconditional support of the House of Representatives for the members of the National Guard; to the Committee on Armed Services.

By Mr. MARKEY (for himself and Mr. SMITH of New Jersey):

H. Res. 543. A resolution expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that the United States Postal Service should issue a semipostal stamp to support medical research relating to Alzheimer's disease; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, and in addition to the Committee on Energy and Commerce, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. TIAHRT (for himself, Mr. MORAN of Kansas, Mr. MOORE of Kansas, and Mrs. BOYDA of Kansas):

H. Res. 544. A resolution expressing the sympathy and pledging the support of the House of Representatives and the people of the United States for the victims of the devastating thunderstorms that caused severe flooding in 20 counties in eastern Kansas beginning on June 26, 2007; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

ADDITIONAL SPONSORS

Under clause 7 of rule XII, sponsors were added to public bills and resolutions as follows:

H.R. 23: Mrs. TAUSCHER, Mr. YOUNG of Alaska, Mr. SULLIVAN, and Mr. LOEBSACK.

H.R. 39: Mr. RANGEL.

H.R. 44: Ms. CLARKE.

H.R. 89: Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts.

H.R. 278: Mr. BAIRD.

H.R. 368: Mr. CARNEY, Mr. LAMPSON, Mr. ADERHOLT, Mr. KLEIN of Florida, and Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida.

H.R. 380: Mr. WELCH of Vermont.

H.R. 398: Mr. GRIJALVA, Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania, and Mr. DAVIS of Illinois.

H.R. 406: Mr. LARSON of Connecticut and Mr. NEAL of Massachusetts.

H.R. 473: Mr. MICA.

H.R. 601: Mr. ALLEN.

H.R. 621: Mr. SCOTT of Georgia, Mr. CALVERT, Mr. ALTMIRE, Mr. KENNEDY, and Mr. TIBERI.

H.R. 643: Ms. KAPTUR, Mr. PICKERING, and Mr. HOLDEN.

H.R. 654: Mr. ISRAEL.

H.R. 695: Mr. ALTMIRE, Mr. JACKSON of Illinois, and Ms. SOLIS.

H.R. 719: Ms. HERSETH SANDLIN, Mr. DONNELLY, and Mrs. MYRICK.

H.R. 728: Mr. ROTHMAN.

H.R. 743: Mr. LUCAS, Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas, and Mr. COLE of Oklahoma.

H.R. 756: Mr. DAVIS of Illinois.

H.R. 758: Mr. COURTNEY.

H.R. 782: Mr. COBLE.

H.R. 814: Ms. HARMAN.

H.R. 819: Mr. RUSH.

H.R. 864: Mr. ALLEN.

H.R. 881: Mr. ACKERMAN.

H.R. 940: Mrs. MYRICK.

H.R. 962: Mr. COHEN.

H.R. 1000: Mr. AL GREEN of Texas, Mr. CLEAVER, Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia, Mrs. CHRISTENSEN, Ms. WATERS, Mr. CLYBURN, Ms. MOORE of Wisconsin, and Ms. WATSON.

H.R. 1022: Ms. CLARKE.

H.R. 1042: Mr. SHAYS.

H.R. 1064: Mr. MCNULTY.

H.R. 1073: Mr. ACKERMAN.

H.R. 1103: Ms. WATERS.

H.R. 1108: Mr. BARROW.

H.R. 1110: Mr. MITCHELL, Mr. GOODLATTE, Mrs. EMERSON, Mr. COSTELLO, Mr. SHERMAN, Mr. TIM MURPHY of Pennsylvania, Mr. SPRATT, Mr. LYNCH, Mr. COHEN, Mr. CRAMER, Mr. DAVID DAVIS of Tennessee, Ms. HERSETH SANDLIN, Mr. MILLER of North Carolina, Ms. SOLIS, Mr. PERLMUTTER, and Mr. NEAL of Massachusetts.

H.R. 1113: Mr. SIRES, Mr. WAMP, Mr. SCHIFF, Mrs. EMERSON, Mr. BERRY, and Ms. SOLIS.

H.R. 1125: Ms. HOOLEY, Ms. HARMAN, Mr. HILL, and Mr. INGLIS of South Carolina.

H.R. 1190: Mr. BARROW, Mr. PRICE of Georgia, Ms. PRYCE of Ohio, Mr. DAVIS of Illinois, and Mrs. JONES of Ohio.

H.R. 1194: Mr. CAMPBELL of California, Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia, Mr. WEXLER, and Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York.

H.R. 1232: Mr. HINOJOSA.

H.R. 1236: Mr. WELCH of Vermont, Mr. PERLMUTTER, and Mrs. JO ANN DAVIS of Virginia.

H.R. 1245: Mr. RUSH and Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida.

H.R. 1275: Mr. MCDERMOTT.

H.R. 1282: Mr. CHANDLER.

H.R. 1302: Mr. MATHESON, Mr. MCNERNEY, and Mrs. TAUSCHER.

H.R. 1304: Mr. BROWN of South Carolina.

H.R. 1310: Mr. BLUMENAUER, Mr. WAXMAN, and Mr. DAVIS of Illinois.

H.R. 1354: Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California.

H.R. 1363: Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas, Mr. FERGUSON, Ms. ESHOO, Mr. SARBANES, Mr. FATTAH, Mr. MCNULTY, Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania, and Mr. SCHIFF.

H.R. 1376: Mr. LEWIS of Georgia, Mr. ELLISON, and Mr. STARK.

H.R. 1390: Mr. SOUDER.

H.R. 1416: Mr. LEVIN.

H.R. 1419: Mr. HOEKSTRA, Mr. DUNCAN, Mr. EHLERS, Mr. DONNELLY, Mr. PENCE, and Mr. DAVIS of Alabama.

H.R. 1439: Mr. CLAY.

H.R. 1459: Mrs. MILLER of Michigan, Mr. UPTON, Mr. MILLER of North Carolina, and Mr. HAYES.

H.R. 1464: Mr. CUMMINGS.

H.R. 1474: Mr. HASTINGS of Florida and Mr. CLAY.

H.R. 1475: Mr. INSLEE.

H.R. 1479: Mr. ACKERMAN.

H.R. 1537: Mr. BRADY of Texas and Mr. MOLLOHAN.

H.R. 1542: Mr. MCNULTY and Mr. CLAY.

H.R. 1567: Mr. GALLEGLY and Mr. TOM DAVIS of Virginia.

H.R. 1584: Mrs. MCMORRIS RODGERS, Mr. FEENEY, and Mr. MARSHALL.

H.R. 1610: Mr. ROTHMAN, Mr. BARRETT of South Carolina, Mr. BLUNT, Mr. LEWIS of Kentucky, Mr. GRAVES, Mr. CAPUANO, Mr. BONNER, Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas, Mr. LOBIONDO, Mr. BURTON of Indiana, Mr. PAYNE, and Mrs. CAPITO.

H.R. 1621: Ms. MOORE of Wisconsin.

H.R. 1647: Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts, Mr. SCHIFF, Mr. JEFFERSON, Mr. DAVIS of Illinois, Ms. DELAURO, Mr. STUPAK, Mr. SPRATT, Mr. BOUCHER, and Mrs. CUBIN.

H.R. 1657: Mr. ABERCROMBIE and Mr. WU.

H.R. 1663: Mrs. BOYDA of Kansas.

H.R. 1665: Mr. LYNCH, Mr. GRIJALVA, Mr. ROTHMAN, and Mr. CLAY.

H.R. 1671: Mr. SESTAK.

H.R. 1673: Mr. WATT.

H.R. 1687: Mr. ALTMIRE.

H.R. 1709: Mr. WAXMAN, Mr. GRIJALVA, Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ of California, Ms. ESHOO, and Mr. PALLONE.

H.R. 1713: Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ.

H.R. 1727: Mr. BERMAN, Mrs. CAPPS, and Ms. HARMAN.

H.R. 1728: Mrs. CHRISTENSEN.

H.R. 1755: Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts.

H.R. 1767: Mr. SESSIONS.

H.R. 1776: Mr. JONES of North Carolina.

H.R. 1783: Ms. GIFFORDS, Mr. LATOURETTE, and Mrs. TAUSCHER.

H.R. 1790: Mr. HINCHEY.

H.R. 1818: Mr. COHEN and Mr. GUTIERREZ.

H.R. 1845: Mr. WALBERG, Mr. SPRATT, and Ms. HERSETH SANDLIN.

H.R. 1878: Mr. AL GREEN of Texas, Mr. BOUCHER, and Ms. LEE.

H.R. 1888: Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania.

H.R. 1895: Ms. CLARKE.

H.R. 1911: Mr. DAVIS of Illinois.

H.R. 1926: Mr. HOLDEN and Mr. BROWN of South Carolina.

H.R. 1932: Mr. ELLISON.

H.R. 1957: Mr. ROTHMAN.

H.R. 1968: Mr. HINOJOSA, Mr. AL GREEN of Texas, Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas, Mr. COHEN, Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania, and Mr. DAVIS of Illinois.

H.R. 1992: Ms. SLAUGHTER.

H.R. 2005: Mr. HINOJOSA and Mr. JONES of North Carolina.

H.R. 2012: Mr. LEWIS of Kentucky.

H.R. 2035: Mr. LEWIS of Kentucky.

H.R. 2045: Mrs. MUSGRAVE and Mr. PRICE of North Carolina.

H.R. 2060: Mr. PLATTS, Mr. RODRIGUEZ, Ms. BEAN, Ms. WATSON, and Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas.

H.R. 2095: Ms. HOOLEY and Mr. WU.

H.R. 2110: Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland.

H.R. 2122: Mr. MOORE of Kansas, Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida, Ms. HERSETH SANDLIN, Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York, Mr. WU, and Ms. SOLIS.

H.R. 2125: Mr. GARRETT of New Jersey and Mr. PATRICK MURPHY of Pennsylvania.

H.R. 2129: Mr. LANTOS, Mr. FATTAH, Mr. HONDA, and Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ of California.

H.R. 2138: Mr. MEEKS of New York, Ms. HARMAN, Mr. BOSWELL, Mr. MICHAUD, and Mr. FRANKS of Arizona.

H.R. 2159: Mr. OBERSTAR.

H.R. 2165: Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida.

H.R. 2183: Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas.

H.R. 2205: Mr. BRADY of Texas.

H.R. 2210: Mr. GRIJALVA.

H.R. 2211: Mr. UDALL of Colorado, Mr. CARNAHAN, and Mr. CAPUANO.

H.R. 2221: Mr. DAVIS of Illinois.

H.R. 2274: Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN.

H.R. 2280: Mr. PITTS, Mr. NUNES, Mr. HINOJOSA, and Mr. CARNEY.

H.R. 2287: Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland.

H.R. 2295: Mr. BAKER, Mr. FEENEY, and Mr. ROGERS of Alabama.

H.R. 2303: Mr. HENSARLING.

H.R. 2315: Mr. JORDAN, Mr. WELCH of Vermont, and Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland.

H.R. 2327: Ms. HARMAN and Mr. CASTLE.

H.R. 2342: Ms. HARMAN.

H.R. 2343: Mr. SOUDER.

H.R. 2347: Mr. TIM MURPHY of Pennsylvania, Mr. RANGEL, and Mr. GERLACH.

H.R. 2370: Mr. MORAN of Virginia, Mr. FORBES, Mr. BILIRAKIS, Mr. EHLERS, and Mr. DAVIS of Illinois.

H.R. 2373: Mr. MEEK of Florida.

H.R. 2380: Mr. RYAN of Ohio, Mr. CARDOZA, Mr. DAVID DAVIS of Tennessee, Mr. PICKERING, and Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas.

H.R. 2443: Mr. WALZ of Minnesota, Mr. DEFAZIO, Mr. YOUNG of Alaska, and Mr. PERLMUTTER.

H.R. 2449: Mr. GORDON.

H.R. 2468: Ms. BORDALLO, Mr. NADLER, and Mr. MCGOVERN.

H.R. 2526: Mr. SIRES.

H.R. 2548: Mrs. NAPOLITANO, Mr. BERMAN, and Ms. WATSON.

H.R. 2550: Mr. ADERHOLT, Mr. PAUL, Mr. CAMP of Michigan, and Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland.

H.R. 2564: Mr. INGLIS of South Carolina.

H.R. 2567: Mr. TERRY and Mr. SHAYS.

H.R. 2581: Mr. ELLISON.

H.R. 2587: Mr. TANNER, Mr. COOPER, Mr. LINCOLN DAVIS of Tennessee, Mr. DUNCAN, Mr. DAVID DAVIS of Tennessee, and Mr. GORDON.

H.R. 2593: Mr. GONZALEZ.

H.R. 2604: Mr. JEFFERSON, Mr. WEXLER, Mr. PAYNE, Mr. DELAHUNT, and Mr. JACKSON of Illinois.

H.R. 2617: Mr. BRADY of Texas.

H.R. 2629: Mr. WALDEN of Oregon and Mr. HASTINGS of Washington.

H.R. 2659: Mr. CARNEY.

H.R. 2666: Ms. CLARKE and Ms. LEE.

H.R. 2674: Mr. LEVIN.

H.R. 2723: Mr. BRALEY of Iowa, Mr. MATHESON, and Mr. CAPUANO.

H.R. 2740: Mr. DAVIS of Illinois, and Mr. SPRATT.

H.R. 2746: Mr. WAXMAN, and Mr. FATTAH.

H.R. 2761: Mr. DONNELLY.

H.R. 2762: Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts, Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut, Mr. ELLISON, Mr. MOORE of Kansas, Mr. MCDERMOTT, Mr. ABERCROMBIE, Mr. ALLEN, and Mr. NUNES.

H.R. 2774: Mr. ROHRABACHER, Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas, Mr. DAVIS of Illinois, and Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland.

H.R. 2818: Mr. RAMSTAD.

H.R. 2828: Ms. KILPATRICK, Mr. BOYD of Florida, Mr. TOM DAVIS of Virginia, Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi, Mr. WAMP, Ms. WATSON, Mr. BURTON of Indiana, Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas, Mrs. MALONEY of New York, Mr. SMITH of New Jersey, Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts, Mrs. EMERSON, Mr. ACKERMAN, Mr. KIRK, Mr. WEXLER, Mr. LAHOOD, Mr. DAVIS of Illinois, Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida, and Mr. BISHOP of Georgia.

H.R. 2831: Mr. YARMUTH, Mr. SESTAK, Mr. SERRANO, Mr. ELLISON, Mr. BUTTERFIELD, Mr. BERMAN, Mrs. CHRISTENSEN, Mr. ABERCROMBIE, Mr. BOSWELL, Ms. SCHAKOWSKY, Mr. HIGGINS, Mr. MORAN of Virginia, Mr. COHEN, Ms. SOLIS, Mr. JACKSON of Illinois, Ms. GIFFORDS, Mr. GONZALEZ, Mr. HODES, Mr. RANGEL, Mr. RUPPERSBERGER, Mr. DOGGETT, Ms. KILPATRICK, Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida, Ms. MATSUI, Mr. PATRICK MURPHY of Pennsylvania, Mr. CUMMINGS, Mr. SCHIFF, Mr. SARBANES, Mr. RYAN of Ohio, Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ of California, Mr. LARSON of Connecticut, Mr. MILLER of North Carolina, Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas, Mrs. DAVIS of California, Mr. SIRES, Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia, Mr. POMEROY, Mr. TIERNEY, Mr. WILSON of Ohio, Mr. WATT, and Mr. LEVIN.

H.R. 2847: Ms. LEE, Mr. WYNN, Mr. ELLISON, and Mr. INSLEE.

H.R. 2850: Mr. GORDON.

H.R. 2860: Mr. CHANDLER, Mr. WALZ of Minnesota, and Mr. GOODE.

H.R. 2862: Mr. REGULA.

H.R. 2878: Mr. PICKERING.

H.R. 2894: Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland, Mr. SARBANES, Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania, Mr. CUMMINGS, Mr. SHUSTER, Mrs. EMERSON, Mr. HINCHEY, Mr. BISHOP of Utah, Mr. HOYER, and Ms. KILPATRICK.

H.R. 2910: Mr. BOOZMAN, Mr. SOUDER, and Mr. SPRATT.

H.R. 2922: Mr. BUTTERFIELD, Mr. PAYNE, Mr. HINOJOSA, Mr. MCNULTY, Mr. WAXMAN, and Mr. ABERCROMBIE.

H.R. 2926: Mr. CARNAHAN.

H.R. 2934: Mr. BAIRD, Mr. DEFAZIO, Mr. MILLER of Florida, Mr. UDALL of Colorado, Mr. GRAVES, and Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland.

H.R. 2941: Mr. LINCOLN DAVIS of Tennessee.

H.R. 2942: Mr. GERLACH, Ms. SLAUGHTER, Mr. HAYES, and Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ of California.

H.R. 2952: Mr. STUPAK.

H.R. 2954: Mr. BOOZMAN, Mr. BUYER, and Mr. GOODLATTE.

H.R. 2956: Ms. PELOSI, Mr. HOYER, Mr. CLYBURN, Mr. LANTOS, Mr. OBEY, Ms. SLAUGHTER, Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California, Mr. EMANUEL, Mrs. TAUSCHER, Mr. LARSON of Connecticut, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Mr. BECERRA, Ms. DELAURO, Mr. PALLONE, Ms. CASTOR, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania, Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia, Mr. JONES of North Carolina, Mrs. BOYDA of Kansas, Mr. HODES, Mr. BRALEY of Iowa, Ms. HIRONO, Mr. LARSEN of Washington, Mr. WALZ of Minnesota, Mr. PATRICK MURPHY of Pennsylvania, Mr. COHEN, Mr. HARE, Mr. PERLMUTTER, Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ of California, Ms. SHEA-PORTER, Mr. CUMMINGS, Mr. LOEBSACK, Ms. CLARKE, Mr. KAGEN, Ms. GIFFORDS, Mr. MAHONEY of Florida, Mr. WELCH of Vermont, Ms. HARMAN, Mr. COURTNEY, Mr. MEEK of Florida, Mrs. DAVIS of California, and Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas.

H.R. 2963: Mr. BACA.

H.J. Res. 28: Mr. HONDA, Mr. HINCHEY, Mr. HASTINGS of Florida, Ms. WATSON, Mr. JEFFERSON, Mr. GUTIERREZ, and Mr. PAYNE.

H. Con. Res. 10: Mr. FILNER.

H. Con. Res. 28: Mr. MCNERNEY.

H. Con. Res. 40: Mrs. JO ANN DAVIS of Virginia.

H. Con. Res. 111: Mr. KUHL of New York, Mr. PAYNE, Mr. MOORE of Kansas, Mr. ABERCROMBIE, and Mr. MCHUGH.

H. Con. Res. 122: Mr. MOORE of Kansas.

H. Con. Res. 136: Mr. WELLER.

H. Con. Res. 139: Mr. GONZALEZ.

H. Con. Res. 157: Mr. CALVERT, and Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ of California.

H. Con. Res. 176: Ms. WATSON and Mr. WOLF.

H. Con. Res. 181: Mr. DAVIS of Illinois.

H. Res. 49: Mr. KILDEE.

H. Res. 95: Mrs. NAPOLITANO.

H. Res. 111: Mr. ISRAEL, Mr. HOLDEN, Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas, and Mr. SAXTON.

H. Res. 121: Mr. WEXLER.

H. Res. 143: Mr. CLAY.

H. Res. 146: Mr. ROTHMAN.

H. Res. 235: Mr. CROWLEY, Mr. COHEN, Mr. CUELLAR, Ms. MATSUI, Mr. CHABOT, and Mr. NADLER.

H. Res. 245: Mr. WEXLER and Mr. MCNERNEY.

H. Res. 333: Mr. FARR and Mr. FILNER.

H. Res. 378: Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas.

H. Res. 417: Mr. NADLER.

H. Res. 433: Mr. SHAYS and Mr. ENGEL.

H. Res. 443: Mr. BROWN of South Carolina and Mr. SERRANO.

H. Res. 444: Ms. FALLIN.

H. Res. 536: Mr. HOYER, Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Mr. RUPPERSBERGER, Mr. SARBANES, and Mr. DAVIS of Illinois.

H. Res. 539: Mrs. DRAKE, Mr. DAVIS of Illinois, Mr. ETHERIDGE, Mr. HOLDEN, Mr. WELCH of Vermont, and Ms. WATSON.

United States of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 110th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 153 WASHINGTON, THURSDAY, JULY 12, 2007 No. 111

Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable ROBERT P. CASEY, Jr., a Senator from the State of Pennsylvania.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Today's opening prayer will be offered by the guest Chaplain, Mr. Rajan Zed of the Indian Association of Northern Nevada.

PRAYER

The guest Chaplain offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

We meditate on the transcendental Glory of the Deity Supreme, who is inside the heart of the Earth, inside the life of the sky, and inside the soul of the Heaven. May He stimulate and illuminate our minds.

Lead us from the unreal to the real, from darkness to light, and from death to immortality. May we be protected together. May we be nourished together. May we work together with great vigor. May our study be enlightening. May no obstacle arise between us.

May the Senators strive constantly to serve the welfare of the world, performing their duties with the welfare of others always in mind, because by devotion to selfless work one attains the supreme goal of life. May they work carefully and wisely, guided by compassion and without thought for themselves.

United your resolve, united your hearts, may your spirits be as one, that you may long dwell in unity and concord.

Peace, peace, peace be unto all.

Lord, we ask You to comfort the family of former First Lady, Lady Bird Johnson.

Amen.

(Disturbance in the Visitors' Galleries)

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Sergeant at Arms will restore order in the Chamber.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable ROBERT P. CASEY, Jr., led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. BYRD).

The legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, July 12, 2007.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable ROBERT P. CASEY, Jr., a Senator from the State of Pennsylvania, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ROBERT C. BYRD,
President pro tempore.

Mr. CASEY thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

EXTENSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that there be a full 30 minutes of morning business. I have a brief statement I want to make.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, there will be a period of morning business. Once that is closed, the Senate will resume the Defense authorization bill at which time an amendment from the Republican side is expected to be offered. Once we have disposed of the Republican amendment, the next first-degree amendment from the majority side will be the wounded warriors amendment to be offered by Chairman LEVIN.

I have met with my staff this morning, and they have been meeting with Republican staff on the committee. I have spoken to Senator WARNER and Senator MCCAIN. We want this bill to have a full airing. We want people to have the opportunity to offer amendments. We are going to try to work our way through the procedural morass we find when we have a complicated bill, but we hope when we complete this legislation next week, people will feel they have had an opportunity to offer amendments.

We know there are a number of issues relating to Iraq. We want to try to get those up and disposed of. There are some other amendments I know people want to offer, nonrelated amendments, but I hope we can hold back from doing that. We should keep this bill one related to defense. I hope we can do that. There will be other opportunities, as we proceed through legislation, to offer some of the important nonrelated matters.

THE GUEST CHAPLAIN

Mr. REID. Let me say a few words about the guest Chaplain. Mr. Zed is a resident of Reno, NV. He serves as director of interfaith relations of the Hindu temple in Reno and is a spokesman for the Indian Association of Northern Nevada. He serves as the Hindu chaplain in northern Nevada and northern California hospitals. He teaches at Truckee Meadows Community College in Reno.

In addition to his tireless work in the Hindu faith, he is also active in the community doing many different activities . He serves on the governing

● This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.

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board of the Northern Nevada International Center, is a member of the Reno Police Chief Advisory Board, and is a member of the Diversity Action Plan Committee of the Washoe County School District.

Mr. Zed was born in India. That is where he studied to become a Hindu chaplain. He holds degrees, including a master's degree from San Jose State University, in mass communications. He has a master's degree in business administration from the University of Nevada Reno.

I have had a long-standing association with the Indian community. I went to college in Logan, UT, Utah State University, a cold, cold place. Brigham Young, when he sent people to colonize the West, had people come back from Cache County to tell him that it couldn't be settled because it froze there every month of the year. Well, that is not quite true, but it freezes all but a couple months of the year. It is a wonderful community and a great university. It has grown a lot since I was there.

I lived off campus. I went there 2 years. I went to a junior college the first 2 years. I lived off campus. I was married. I would drive up that hill to the campus, and walking every day were students. They were Indians, coming from India to the United States to study. Utah State specialized in engineering and agriculture. These young men came from India to study at Utah State University. I would give them rides. I did that for 2 years, put as many in the car as would fit. When it came time to graduate, one of them came to me and said: Could you and Mrs. Reid stay over a day. We would like to do a traditional Indian feast for you.

Well, I am from Searchlight. I didn't know what they were talking about. But we had that traditional Indian feast. Many of them were dressed similar to Mr. Zed. That was an eye opener for me. They had all this Indian food. I am a guy from Searchlight. We like beans and rice and potatoes and, when we were lucky, some round steak. My mother used to pound it so it would be tender and we could eat it. It was unusual food for somebody from Searchlight, but we enjoyed it. It was a lot of fun. They gave us a number of gifts when the feast was over, and it was really a feast. It was all traditional Indian food.

I don't remember all they gave me, but I do remember one item. It is in my office in the Capitol. That was many years ago. We have had five children since then and lots of grandchildren. But it was a little statue of Gandhi, hand carved. It is ivory. It is done so well, you can pull the staff out of his hand. It is done really well. I have protected and saved that all these years. It is in my office. I have always had it there.

The reason I mention that is that if people have any misunderstanding about Indians and Hindus, all they have to do is think of Gandhi. Here is a man who changed the world, a man who believed in peace. We heard the prayer: Peace, peace, peace. If there was ever a time, with this international war on terror that we are fighting now, where people have to understand how important peace is, think of Ghandi, a man who gave his life for peace, a tiny little man in physical stature but a giant in morality. Gandhi is the man that Martin Luther King, Jr., followed. His nonviolence was all based on the teachings of Gandhi. As a result of Gandhi, we had the civil rights movement, led by another man small in stature. Larger than Ghandi, Martin Luther King was not a giant of a man physically, but he was a giant of a man morally, just as Gandhi.

I think it speaks well of our country that someone representing a faith of about a billion people comes here and can speak in communication with our Heavenly Father regarding peace. I am grateful he is here. I am thankful he was able to offer this prayer of peace in the Capitol. I say to everyone concerned, think of Gandhi. If you have a problem in the world, think what this great man has done to bring peace and nonviolence to a troubled world.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader.

REMEMBERING LADY BIRD JOHNSON

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, when Lady Bird Taylor met the man she would marry in the fall of 1934, her first reaction was to pull back. ''Lyndon came on very strong,'' she said. ''My instinct was to withdraw.''

And when an assassin's bullet thrust her into the national spotlight on another fall day in 1963, she withdrew again. America remembers this remarkable woman for the quiet dignity with which she let a nation and a stricken wife mourn the loss of a President they loved. And our first reaction to her in those days of mourning was gratitude.

Now we mourn her passing, after a long tumultuous life that was marked above all by quiet service and a love of beauty.

She was nothing like her husband.

Lyndon Johnson was an overpowering figure who filled up every room he entered. His personality still reverberates through these walls. But he always knew what he needed to get ahead in life, and he saw in Lady Bird the tact and gentility he saw lacking in himself.

He asked her to marry him on their first date.

And soon the aspiring politician would marry this shy and pretty rancher's daughter. Sam Rayburn said it was the best thing Lyndon Johnson ever did.

Lady Bird brought a deep love of nature from east Texas to the White House, and she shared it with America. Residents and tourists in Washington have her to thank for the natural beauty that surrounds us here and that makes us proud to call this city our Nation's Capital.

Millions of travelers and commuters have her to thank for the flowers that line our roads. The blues, reds and yellows that light up America's highways are a living, lasting legacy to the woman who guided the Highway Beautification Act into law.

A friend to every First Lady since Eleanor Roosevelt, Lady Bird Johnson stepped out of the national spotlight as quietly as she stepped into it, again respecting the national mood at another painful moment in our history.

She outlived her famous husband by more than three decades, and we didn't hear or see much of her over the years. But she'd remind us from time to time that she was still here, quietly accepting an honor for her husband or launching some good environmental work. And we were always glad to see her. She became for us a kind of living assurance that beauty and grace outlive tragedy and loss.

We will miss her. We mourn with her daughters, Lynda and Luci, and their families. And we join them in honoring a very good American life that was spent in generous service to family and country.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will now be a period for the transaction of morning business for 30 minutes with Senators permitted to speak therein, with the time equally divided and controlled by the two leaders or their designees.

The Senator from Oklahoma.

FAIRNESS DOCTRINE

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, today, I want to reiterate something I talked about on Monday and maybe elaborate a little bit. I am one of the cosponsors of an amendment that several people will be discussing today, amendment No. 2020—it is primarily offered by my colleague, Senator COLEMAN, and myself and Senator DEMINT and Senator THUNE and, I believe, some others also—to prohibit the reimplementation of the Fairness Doctrine.

Over the past few weeks, the Fairness Doctrine has received quite a bit of attention. The Democrat-controlled House of Representatives had a vote on June 28, just a couple weeks ago. The House voted 309 to 115 to prohibit the

FCC from using funds to reinstate the Fairness Doctrine.

Now, the Fairness Doctrine is a regulation the FCC developed to require FCC-licensed broadcasters to provide contrasting viewpoints on controversial issues. However, the FCC conducted a review of this regulation in 1985. I remember this well. This was back during the Reagan administration. They concluded—and I am quoting now the FCC:

[W]e no longer believe that the Fairness Doctrine serves the public interest.

In explaining why the FCC reached this conclusion, the FCC wrote—I am quoting again further—

[T]he interest of the public is fully served by the multiplicity of voices in the marketplace today and that the intrusion by government——

The intrusion by government——

into the content of programming unnecessarily restricts the journalistic freedoms of broadcasters. The FCC's refusal to enforce the Fairness Doctrine was later upheld in the DC Circuit Court of Appeals.

That is a little bit of the history that took place, and there was not much controversy back in those days. Everybody pretty much agreed this is something that should be driven by the market, driven by the people, as opposed to being spoon-fed to the people by some governmental agency or anybody else.

So you might ask, why would a regulation that was found to be unnecessary over 20 years ago be controversial today? I can tell you why that is. It is because—and I happened to be in the middle of this when it happened—on June 22 I said something on a talk radio show that became quite controversial having to do with a statement I had made to a couple of the Senators of a more liberal standing in the Senate.

They believed the content—which it is—of talk radio has a huge bias toward the conservative viewpoints. Now, I had made the statement—and I hate to sound rash when I do this, but I want to be accurate—I said: Well, you guys don't really understand. This is market driven. The market is driving it. There is no market out there for your liberal tripe.

So it happened, coincidentally, that the day after I made that statement, the Center for American Progress came out with this report. It is called ''The Structural Imbalance of Political Talk Radio.'' Now, I am not critical of the people who are behind this. It is the people from the Clinton White House. Clearly, it is John Podesta, Mark Lloyd, and many others who are in charge of this program. I am not sure. I have heard that the Center for American Progress is supposed to be maybe another viewpoint from the Heritage Foundation. You hear all kinds of things. But this is what is interesting in this report. First of all, they go through and document the fact that in talk radio 91 percent of the content is conservative. I do not disagree with that. They say only 9 percent is progressive, or I would say liberal. I do not disagree with that.

After they make their case, they try to state that there has to be a correction for it. I am going to read just a few excerpts from this report.

They said:

These findings—

Now, the findings we are talking about are the 91 percent—

may not be surprising given general impressions about the format, but they are stark and raise serious questions about whether the companies licensed to broadcast over the public airwaves are serving the listening needs of all Americans.

Now, that is really interesting, ''the listening needs of all Americans.'' What are the listening needs of all Americans? Who is going to determine that? Anyway, that is what they seem to be hanging their hat on. They said:

Our conclusion is—

I am reading from this report which is from the Center for American Progress. That is John Podesta and Mark Lloyd and the rest of that group.

Our conclusion is that the gap between conservative and progressive talk radio is the result of multistructural problems in the U.S. regulatory system.

It goes on to explain this. And then—I am kind of a slow learner. But after I figured out what they were talking about, they were talking about there are regulations that could be violated, or the intent of regulations could be in violation here. So they talk about some prescribed regulations to correct this problem.

Now I move to page 11 of this report, and they come to this conclusion. They said:

If commercial radio broadcasters are unwilling to abide by these regulatory standards or the FCC is unable to effectively regulate in the public interest, a spectrum use fee should be levied on owners to directly support local, regional, and national public broadcasting.

You cannot get more socialistic than that in the comments. Now, the whole idea they are saying that not only then would talk show hosts who have a strong bias in one way or another lose their shows—let's say Sean Hannity, Rush Limbaugh, any of the rest of them—but they also would have to be fined and that money would go to support public broadcasting. Now, that is what caused the interest after 20 years.

When I say it is market driven, if you do not believe that, look at the effort by Al Franken and other liberals who tried to start Air America. Air America was designed to be on the liberal side. The problem was, nobody wanted to listen to it. So this is the problem that is out there, that people want to get away from what is market driven.

We went through this same exercise, I might add, not too long ago, about a year ago, I think it was. We had various—let's see, Armed Forces Radio. I have it here somewhere. There are three different radio stations that reach our troops around the world—not just in Iraq and Afghanistan but around the world. So there was an effort to prescribe programming so it would be equally liberal and conservative. Then there was an uproar by our troops over there because they did not want that. So through their publications, the Army Times and some other publications, they determined what they wanted to listen to, and it was primarily conservative.

So that is what has brought this thing up, and several people in the House and several people in the Senate—in this body—have said: We need to get the FCC to reinstitute the Fairness Doctrine.

Now, the amendment that was passed in the House of Representatives by that huge margin I just mentioned was to prohibit the FCC from changing its viewpoint as far as the Fairness Doctrine is concerned.

I have been outspoken on this issue for some time. For example, on the Defense authorization legislation we made quite an issue out of this. By the way, I might want to add, we won that battle. We ended up now so they are getting the programming they want, and it happens to be—this is quite a coincidence—it happens to be about the same—91 percent versus 9 percent—that the people are demanding today in terms of the market. The same principle applies again.

I have long said that talk radio is market driven. There simply is not much market for some of this other stuff that is out there. Some Senators have made it clear they intend to reinstate the Fairness Doctrine, but free speech is fundamental to what it means to be an American, and it must be protected. Reimposing some form of the Fairness Doctrine threatens first amendment rights. We all know that. But really what is most important is it gets to be very similar to some of these countries we criticize all the time where the government is trying to take over what comes through their airwaves.

So I am pleased to join my many colleagues, including Senators COLEMAN, DEMINT, and THUNE, in supporting this amendment, and I urge the Senate to speak just as definitely against the Fairness Doctrine.

I have a letter from the National Association of Broadcasters. In this letter—I will not read the whole thing—it winds up by saying:

In the 20 years since elimination of the Fairness Doctrine, there has been a veritable explosion in alternative media outlets. Today, there are over 13,000 radio stations, more than 1,700 TV stations, nine broadcast TV networks, hundreds of cable and satellite channels, scores of mobile media devices and an infinite number of Internet sites that cater to every political persuasion and ideology. The Internet now enables consumers to obtain, and communicate to the world, virtually unlimited content.

Of course, this is a strong endorsement of our position by the National Association of Broadcasters. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that this letter be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF BROADCASTERS,
Washington, DC, July 11, 2007.

DEAR SENATOR: I write today to express our strong opposition to a reinstatement of the so-called ''Fairness Doctrine.''

This discredited regulation, which stemmed from the 1940s and was eliminated two decades ago, required television and radio broadcasters to present contrasting points of view when covering controversial issues of public importance. In the Federal Communications Commission's 1985 Fairness Report, the FCC asserted that the doctrine no longer produced its desired effect and instead caused a ''chilling effect'' on news coverage that may also be in violation of the First Amendment.

I write to you today urging you to oppose any attempt to resurrect this long-discarded regulation. Free speech must be just that—free from government influence, interference and censorship.

The so-called Fairness Doctrine would stifle the growth of diverse views and, in effect, make free speech less free. Newsgathers, media outlets and reporters will be less willing to present ideas that might be controversial. In fact, FCC officials found that the doctrine ''had the net effect of reducing, rather than enhancing, the discussion of controversial issues of public importance,'' and therefore was in violation of constitutional principles. (''FCC Ends Enforcement of Fairness Doctrine,'' Federal Communications Commission News, Report No. MM–263, August 4, 1987.)

In the 20 years since elimination of the Fairness Doctrine, there has been a veritable explosion in alternative media outlets. Today, there are over 13,000 radio stations, more than 1,700 TV stations, nine broadcast TV networks, hundreds of cable and satellite channels, scores of mobile media devices and an infinite number of Internet sites that cater to every political persuasion and ideology. The Internet now enables consumers to obtain, and communicate to the world, virtually unlimited content.

Bringing back the Fairness Doctrine is unnecessary, unwarranted, and unconstitutional.

Sincerely,

DAVID K. REHR.

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from South Carolina.

Mr. DEMINT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to speak for 15 minutes in morning business.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection?

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, if the Senator will amend his consent request so that both sides have equal additional time in morning business, there will be no objection.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Does the Senator modify his request?

Mr. DEMINT. Mr. President, I modify my request that I have 15 minutes and my colleague have 15 minutes as well.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. No objection. I thank the Senator.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. DEMINT. Thank you, Mr. President. I thank my colleague for yielding.

EARMARK REFORM

Mr. DEMINT. Mr. President, I first thank my colleague from Oklahoma for bringing to the floor this important issue of free speech in America, and the bill that would help to keep the FCC from imposing gag rules on talk radio and other media. But that is not the purpose of my trip to the floor today.

Mr. President, I rise today to speak about the ongoing effort in the Senate to block earmark reform. It has now been 175 days—over 6 months—since we passed our earmark transparency rules. Yet they still have not been enacted.

As my colleagues know, we passed two important earmark transparency rules back in January that, first, require public disclosure of earmarks and, second, prohibit Congress from adding secret earmarks behind closed doors in conference committees where they cannot be openly debated or voted on. Both of these rules were unanimously supported by the Senate. But now—over 6 months later—Democrats are insisting that we change or drop these rules behind closed doors.

I asked the majority leader before July 4 if we could agree to protect these earmark reforms in conference, but he said no. I am not asking for an ironclad agreement. He said they would change in conference. I asked him what changes he wanted to make to these important earmark rules that had passed unanimously, but so far we do not have a response.

In fact, in CongressDailyAM, they put it quite clearly when they said:

[Democrats] could not guarantee that DeMint's earmark language would survive negotiations with the House.

I would only correct one thing about that quote. This was actually NANCY PELOSI's language, modified slightly by Senator DURBIN, and voted on unanimously in the Senate. They are hardly my earmark requirements.

Well, there you have it. After stalling and blocking the enactment of these important ethics reforms for over 6 months, and after coming up with every excuse in the book to put them off, the Democrat leadership is now beginning to admit they plan to kill earmark reform.

It is now day 175 of business as usual in the Senate, and the party that said it would clean up the culture of corruption in Washington is already embracing it.

The majority leader and the majority whip made several statements on this issue on the Senate floor the other night, and I want to address them.

First, the majority leader said that my efforts to protect earmark reform were a ''ploy,'' a ''diversion,'' and a ''smokescreen'' to stop the ethics bill.

This accusation is completely false, and these two Senators are probably the only two people in America who believe it. I voted for the lobbying and ethics bill, and I even supported going to conference. In fact, I came to the floor on Monday and asked for consent to adopt the earmark transparency rules and to go to conference with the House on the ethics bill. But the other side objected because they only want to move forward on the ethics bill if they can gut the earmark reforms in secret.

The truth is, the only thing stopping the lobbying and ethics bill from moving forward is the Democratic leadership and their desire to kill meaningful earmark reform behind closed doors. They may want to hide their opposition to transparency by accusing me of having a secret plan to kill the bill, but Americans know the truth. They know folks in Congress love earmarks and will do anything to keep this process secret and easy for Members to designate money to their pet projects. It is clear, the only thing stopping this bill is obstruction to earmark reform.

Next, the majority leader said it was a ''fantasy'' for anyone to think they would kill earmark reform behind closed doors. Again, I am not sure how these things can be said with a straight face. Several Senators on the other side, including the majority leader himself, have publicly said they intend to change these rules behind closed doors, but they won't say how they are going to change them. If this is all a fantasy, then why won't they tell us what they plan to do with these reforms? This is supposed to be a bill about transparency, but the other side wants to rewrite it in secret.

But setting aside for a moment the fact that they have publicly admitted they plan to change these rules, we need to realize it is earmark reform we are talking about here. The culture of earmarking runs very deep in this town, and it is no fantasy that there are many in this body on both sides of the aisle who want to preserve that culture.

Next, the majority leader said Democrats are already complying with the rule and therefore we should trust them. The truth is the earmark disclosure the Democrats have given us is spotty at best. In fact, the Congressional Research Service says only 4 committees out of 18 have implemented even an informal disclosure rule. Even worse, it says these four informal rules cannot be enforced on the floor of the Senate.

The Defense bill we are debating right now is a perfect example. The committee put out a partial list of the earmark sponsors, but it has failed to make public the letters from these earmark sponsors certifying that they have no financial interest in the projects they have requested. This is a recipe for more Duke Cunninghams. It is a recipe for corruption.

Congressional Quarterly put it quite clearly when it stated:

The earmarks—listed in the defense bill for the first time ever—would not have been

published at all had most Democrats on the Senate Armed Services Committee gotten their way.

But the Democratic leadership wants us to trust them anyway. They want us to trust the people writing the earmarks to follow the rules without any accountability. It won't work, and the Defense bill is a perfect example.

It is also important to note that the Democrats have done nothing to address the practice of adding secret earmarks in closed door conference committees. As my colleagues know, one of our earmark transparency rules prohibits this awful practice. The Democrats in the House have been trying to get away with adding their earmarks in secret without any oversight, and now Senate Democrats are blocking a rule to stop it on our side.

Everyone knows the game around here. Everyone knows if you want a questionable earmark, you wait until the bill gets to conference and then you slip it in where it cannot be seen, where it cannot be debated, and where it cannot be stopped. Nothing has been done to stop this practice. The majority leader may believe Democrats have been transparent enough, but it is clear they have not. That is why we need a rule that will hold us all accountable.

Next, the majority leader said I am preventing the Congress from ''restoring the faith'' of the American people in their Government. Congress will never restore faith with the American people until it addresses earmarks. As long as Members of Congress can direct Federal tax dollars to the special interest of their choosing with little or no accountability, we will see more bribes, more indictments, more prison sentences, and more Duke Cunninghams. Ethics reform is not complete without earmark reform. Americans know what I am talking about. That is why we need to get this right.

Next, Senator DURBIN said if I would only look at the bills, I would see the Democrats have fully complied with the proposed rules. The truth is if Senator DURBIN would look at the earmark disclosure rule—which he wrote—he would know it requires Senators to certify they have no conflict of interest in the earmark, and that these certifications will be made public on the committee Web site. If he would do some checking and go to the Armed Services Committee Web site, he would see there are no letters there for all the earmarks that were added to the Defense authorization bill we are currently debating. That is one example of how the majority is skirting the rules and it is one example of why they don't want a formal rule that would stop them from pulling these tricks.

But setting aside their failures to be fully transparent, if Senator DURBIN believes they are in full compliance with the earmark rules, then why is he so opposed to enacting them? What is he afraid of? If they are already complying with these rules, why not formalize them so they can be actually enforced?

The truth is they are not fully complying with the rules and they have no plan to. They have been earmarking at will for years and they don't want anything that would make them more open or transparent.

The majority leader also said my desire to protect earmark reform is a ''guise'' to kill the ethics bill. Again, this is completely false. For me, this is about reforming the way we spend American tax dollars. That is my motive. I am one who believes that the culture of earmarks is what drives the culture of corruption, and I know many others agree. The only ''guise'' here is the guise the Democrats are putting up to hide their opposition to earmark reform. They keep saying they want to go to conference on the ethics bill, but they refuse to tell us what they plan to do with the earmark reform once they get there. Instead, they say ''trust us.''

Democrats keep saying they want an ethics bill, but the truth is they don't want earmark reform. They have called it a ''petty issue'' and a ''trifle.'' It is all a guise. We all know what this debate is about—it is about earmarks and whether we are going to have business as usual in the Senate.

The other side wants us to change the way people outside of Congress behave—such as the lobbyists who bring their issues to us—but they completely oppose changing anything on earmarks, because this limits their own ability and it forces them to be accountable. That is the real guise here.

The majority leader appears to be so opposed to meaningful earmark reform that he is willing to cancel the August break in order to pressure me to allow them to gut these reforms in secret. From my perspective, cancelling the August break to debate earmark reform would not be a bad thing. We need to debate this, because there are many here in the Senate who still don't get it. They still don't understand that Americans are sick and tired of business as usual in Washington.

The majority leader also said the other night that he may try to force this down our throats, as he tried to force the immigration bill down our throats by filing a number of cloture motions. The other side says what I am doing to force them to protect earmark reform has never been done before and would set a bad precedent. They actually think people will believe that nobody has ever objected to going to conference, that no one has ever objected to sending a bill to a back room where it can be changed at will.

What I am doing is exactly what Senator REID did for years when he was in the minority. According to the Congressional Research Service, the Senator who has blocked the most attempts to go to conference over the past three Congresses is Senator HARRY REID. On several occasions he has demanded specific guarantees or concessions in exchange for allowing a bill to go to conference.

Senator REID knew then what he seems to have forgotten now: that a conference committee is not an entitlement. A bill is not entitled to go to conference where it can be changed behind closed doors. It is a luxury the majority leadership has used, but he is not entitled to it. There are a number of ways we can reconcile the differences between the two bills. The Senator from Nevada knew this before, but now that he is the majority leader, he seems to have forgotten.

All of this can be easily solved in a bipartisan way. All my friends on the other side need to do is accept these rules which were unanimously supported by the Senate back in January. And if for some reason they believe these rules need technical changes, then they should tell us what they are going to do to change them so we can work it out in the open instead of behind closed doors.

I hope my friends on the other side will change their minds. These are Senate rules that I am talking about, and there is no reason why we need to be negotiating with the House on them. All my friends on the other side have to do is stop blocking earmark reform and stop trying to change the rules in secret, and we can move on.

Americans have seen the ethical problems associated with earmarks. They have watched what happened to Duke Cunningham and they have seen a number of Members of Congress forfeit their seats on appropriations committees due to conflicts of interest. Americans understand that lobbying and ethics reform will not be complete if we don't do anything to shine the light on the process.

Mr. President, could I ask how much time I have remaining?

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. NELSON of Florida). The Senator has 1 minute 10 seconds remaining.

Mr. DEMINT. I am more long-winded than I thought here.

Let me conclude, although we will need to continue this debate.

My goal is to get the lobby and ethics reform bill to conference. But a key part of that bill has always been earmark reform. The House has passed earmark reform as a House rule. We have passed the rule on the Senate side, but we have not adopted it. There is no reason to send a Senate rule that governs how we do business to a conference with the House. I wish to see this body accept this as a rule that has been unanimously voted on so we can move on to conference with lobby and ethics reform.

I am not holding up ethics reform or lobbying reform; I am asking this body to do what we have already voted on, and that is to accept the rule that we will be transparent about earmarks and how we spend American tax dollars.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island is recognized.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I believe I have 15 minutes to speak in morning business; is that correct?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has that time, plus the additional time granted to the Senator from South Carolina.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. I thank the Chair.

IRAQ

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, the American people have demanded a new direction in Iraq, and the momentum building toward that change is strong. It is not difficult to understand why. More than 3,600 brave American troops have lost their lives. Tens of thousands have returned home gravely injured—gravely injured. The war now costs Americans $10 billion every month in Iraq, with total spending now exceeding that of the Vietnam war. It has ruined our international standing.

Despite all this, little has changed on the ground. Violence has worsened. Sectarian fighting goes on virtually unabated, with deadly attacks taking a severe and relentless toll. While courageous Americans die, Iraqi politicians argue and stall.

Leaving U.S. troops caught in the morass of Iraq has not made that country more secure and, more important, it does not make our country more secure. To stay President Bush's course will continue to cost our men and women in uniform their lives and their physical and mental health. It will continue to drain our national Treasury and further erode what little good will remains for America around the world. It will leave our military with overstrained troops, overstressed families, and equipment and resources in disrepair. We are breaking our military in Iraq.

It is time for a change. The American people know this. Democrats and, to their credit, many Republicans in this Congress know this. Anyone who is listening or looking with clear eyes knows this. Yet after years of misjudgments, years of misleading slogans, years of misplaced priorities, and years of failure, this President still refuses to do what he must do: Change course in Iraq and bring our courageous American troops home.

Just the other day, the President reasserted his intention to stay the course, to continue this war indefinitely, an open-ended commitment, a blank check, with no prospects for redeployment or a new direction. Again, President Bush has failed to listen to the millions of Americans who have called on him and who have called on us to bring the war to an end. Enough is enough. It is time for a change.

Mr. President, a Member of this body recently said this about our Nation's course in Iraq:

> In my judgment, the costs and risks of continuing down the current path outweigh the potential benefits that might be achieved. Persisting indefinitely with the surge strategy will delay policy adjustments that have a better chance of protecting our vital interests over the long-term.

I happen to agree with those words spoken by the very distinguished Senator, RICHARD LUGAR of Indiana, but what I like the most about them is the voice of reason and thoughtfulness they impart to this debate. There has been too little of that to date. The questions we face over this war in Iraq are serious questions, and they demand seriousness and reason from those who would grapple with them. Senator LUGAR's statement reflects that thoughtfulness, reflects that reason, in the midst of a debate which has all too often been characterized by a lack of those characteristics.

Look at this administration, which too often communicates not with reason but with slogans and sound bites: ''Stay the course.'' ''Global war on terror.'' ''Cut and run.'' ''Precipitous withdrawal.'' People watching this continuing debate, mark when you hear the phrase ''precipitous withdrawal.'' You are hearing the end of reason, and sloganeering. This is no service to the people of our country, not when serious and difficult problems must be solved. Just look where this slogan leadership has gotten us so far. It is a dishonor roll of failure: weapons of mass destruction, nonexistent; occupation planning, incompetence; reconstruction efforts, failed; the strain on our troops and their families, disabling; the treatment of our wounded troops, disgraceful; expenditures, massive; fraud, run rampant; the confidence of the American people, forfeited after cascades of false optimism and phony good news.

It is time, as Senator LUGAR's words exemplify, to pursue intelligent, thoughtful, and realistic decisions about our course in Iraq, decisions that will protect our national interest. It is time to put the slogans away and thoughtfully extricate ourselves from a disastrous mess.

I hope we can take these steps forward in the Senate together. I am encouraged that several Republican friends have stated clearly that they cannot support the President's failed course in Iraq and are seeking real change.

As I have said many times in this Chamber, our strategy to effect change in Iraq requires the rapid and responsible redeployment of our troops. As I told the President directly when I met with him several months ago, I see the prospect of U.S. redeployment as the most powerful force at our disposal in this conflict now. That prospect of redeployment of American troops will eliminate the insurgents' argument that America is an occupying army, taking away from them a powerful recruiting tool for militant extremists. It will spur Iraq's political leaders to step forward, to quit slow-walking us through their own civil war and take responsibility for the security and governance of their own country. It will confront neighboring nations with a real impetus to assume more positive roles in assuring the region's stability. It will help restore the faith of the world in the leadership, the integrity, the good judgment, and the good will of our great country.

The President's surge plan is not the new direction Americans are calling for. It is a tactic—a tactic that can only be effective as part of a larger coherent strategy. And strategy, in turn, largely depends on whether the overarching dynamic works in America's favor. In this regard, America is presently on the worst possible footing.

A redeployment of our troops creates the potential to change this overarching dynamic for the better, freeing us to focus on more effective strategies to counter al-Qaida and to stabilize the region. Iraqi leaders will have to reach compromises with each other because their vision for their country's future will no longer be drawn with a major U.S. military presence in it. In the time it will take to bring our massive deployment of troops home, we can send a clear signal to Iraqi leaders and to Iraq's neighbors that America is standing down and it is time for them to stand up. We can help them do that.

This is a critical step, and thoughtful, reasoned, political, and diplomatic leadership will be essential to take advantage of the new dynamic a redeployment offers. I will confess that I am deeply troubled that this administration may not have the credibility it needs to accomplish this difficult task, even if it were of a mind to try.

This Congress can help set favorable conditions for executive action. We cannot legislate diligence, we cannot legislate thoughtfulness, we cannot legislate competence, and it is not clear that this administration is viewed as capable of those qualities any longer. It may take new faces and new voices to represent our country credibly in this process. Fortunately, there are many talented and accomplished people in this country whose perspectives and experience can help build America's credibility and prestige around the world. It will be a significant diplomatic challenge, but it presents a significant—perhaps historic—diplomatic opportunity.

That executive responsibility—the need to put ourselves in that diplomatic arena—does not relieve us in the Senate of our duty to continue to press forcefully on behalf of the millions of Americans who demanded a change in Iraq, to apply reason, thought, and our best care and judgment to a problem that has not yielded to sloganeering. We will keep the pressure on this President and his administration, whose inability to admit failure is leading our precious Nation deeper and deeper into disaster in Iraq.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wisconsin is recognized.

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, first, what a remarkable ally the junior Senator from Rhode Island has been these few months he has been in the Senate. For his eloquence and help on many

issues—particularly this issue—I thank him. I greatly enjoyed listening to his remarks.

It has been 52 months since military operations began in Iraq. We have now been engaged in the Iraq war longer than we were in World War II. Approximately 3,600 Americans have died and 25,000 have been wounded. More than 4 million Iraqis have fled their homes, and tens of thousands, at a minimum, have been killed. With President Bush's surge well underway, violence in Iraq has exploded to unprecedented levels and American troop fatalities are up 70 percent. In short, from all sides, the situation in Iraq is an unmitigated disaster.

As if that weren't bad enough, our national security continues to suffer as the administration's single-minded focus on Iraq prevents us from adequately confronting threats of extremism and terrorism around the globe. Indeed, violence and instability continue to fester elsewhere at a great cost to our national security.

Last November, when the American people cast their ballots, they expressed their opposition to this war loudly and clearly. As the situation continues to deteriorate, they have raised their voices still louder. I know my colleagues hear their voices, as more and more of them step forward to call for a long overdue change of course.

At the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue, those voices continue to fall on deaf ears. Time and again, the President has made it clear that nothing—not the wishes of the American people, not the advice of military foreign policy experts, not the concerns of members of both parties—will discourage him from pursuing a misguided war that has no end in sight.

Congress cannot wait for this President to change course in Iraq because you and I know he has no intention of doing so. He has made it clear that he will continue to pursue massive military engagement despite the wishes of the American people, despite the fact that our military is stretched to the breaking point, and despite the fact that our presence in Iraq has been, according to our own State Department, ''used as a rallying cry for radicalization and extremist activity in neighboring countries.''

So it is up to us in Congress to listen to the American people, to save American lives, and to ensure our Nation's security by redeploying our troops from Iraq. We have the power and we have the responsibility to act, and to act now. That is why I will support the amendment offered by Senators LEVIN and JACK REED. By passing binding deadlines for both beginning and ending redeployment, the Senate can take a strong step toward bringing our involvement in this war to a close.

I especially applaud Senators HAGEL, SMITH, and SNOWE for putting principle ahead of party by cosponsoring this amendment. I hope their example inspires still more Senators to realize that it is not enough to just criticize the war or just call on the President to change course and that we don't need to—in fact, we cannot afford to—wait for more reports and more time before taking decisive action.

The Levin-Reed amendment doesn't go as far as I would like. I am concerned that the exception in the amendment, particularly for ''providing logistical support'' to Iraqi troops, would give the administration too much wiggle room to ''repackage'' its military mission instead of redeploying our brave servicemembers. Nonetheless, I am pleased to see so many colleagues—on both sides of the aisle—recognizing, at last, that the President's course in Iraq has failed, that Congress needs to act, and that we can and must safely redeploy our troops.

Other amendments that have been proposed fall short because they don't require the troops to be redeployed. It is not enough to pass something that sounds good but doesn't move us toward ending the war. Weak, feel-good amendments may give people political comfort, but that won't last long. We can fool ourselves, but we can't fool the American people.

Mr. President, it is increasingly clear that the war in Iraq has become the defining aspect of our engagement in this part of the world and that it, coupled with this administration's inconsistent efforts to promote democracy and the rule of law, has unfortunately alienated and angered those whose support and cooperation we need if we are to prevail against al-Qaida and its allies.

Our role in the war in Iraq has generated a level of political turbulence throughout the region and beyond. It has given way to a new variety of al-Qaida-style militants. These militants are gaining prominence in many countries that have traditionally been our allies. The longer we remain in Iraq, the longer these new strains of extremism will threaten the security of the region and, in turn, threaten our Nation. As long as the President's policies continue, Iraq will continue to be what the declassified National Intelligence Estimate calls a ''cause celebre'' for a new generation of terrorists.

Al-Qaida and its affiliates are not a one-country franchise. Yet this administration continues to pretend otherwise, such as calling Iraq the central front in the war on terror. Al-Qaida's networks have not relinquished their global fight to focus exclusively on Iraq. By deploying our troops from Iraq, we can focus on developing a comprehensive global strategy to combat them around the globe.

As I said, the administration's policies in Iraq are an unmitigated disaster. But there is a way to mitigate that disaster, to lessen the burdens it is imposing on our troops, our national security, our taxpayers, and our country. And that is to redeploy our troops from Iraq.

There is no reason to delay this decision until September. We know now what we will know then, and we know it isn't pretty. We have already read in the Pentagon's first quarterly surge report that violence has increased throughout much of the country in recent months, and we know there is no military solution to Iraq's problems. The only question is how long we are prepared to wait and how many Americans we are willing to have killed before we act.

As my colleagues know, the majority leader and I have introduced legislation that would safely redeploy our troops by setting a date, after which our funding for the war would be ended. That is what Congress did in 1993 with respect to our military mission in Somalia. I continue to believe we must be prepared to take that step again to finally put an end to the war in Iraq.

However, if the Levin-Reed amendment wins the support of a majority of the Senate, I believe that will be an important step forward, and I will likely not insist on a vote on the Feingold-Reid amendment at that time. If our efforts to end the war don't succeed, however, I will offer Feingold-Reid as an amendment to the Department of Defense appropriations bill when it is considered by the Senate. Of course, I hope that will not be necessary, but it will depend on whether enough of my colleagues are prepared to back up their words with action, to listen to the American people, and to say enough is enough.

This war doesn't make sense. It is hurting our country, and it is time to end it.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. NELSON of Nebraska). The Senator from Alabama may proceed in morning business.

IRAQ

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, I have great respect for my colleague, Senator FEINGOLD. If I am not mistaken, he opposed the authorization of military force in Iraq and has consistently opposed that policy. I am not supportive of the Levin amendment. I think it would result in a precipitous, irresponsible, and dangerous redeployment of our soldiers, confusing to our allies, placing our soldiers who remain in Iraq at greater risk, and placing the Iraqi soldiers, many of whom, indeed, are standing with us right now to fight al-Qaida in Iraq, making their lives more dangerous. In fact, they are taking more casualties than we are. It is not correct to say they are not performing. We wish they would perform much better. We wish the Government was stronger. But, in fact, we are at this very moment shoulder to shoulder in operation after operation around Iraq.

I will note this. This is not a little, bitty nation we are leaders of. This is the United States of America, a great nation. Two months ago, the Congress

of this great Nation voted to fund the surge in Iraq, and this Senate voted 99 to 0 to confirm General Petraeus to lead that surge. We required an interim report on July 15 on how things are going and a more serious, comprehensive report from General Petraeus himself in September. OK? That is what we did, and that is what we are doing.

For the last, I believe, 3 weeks, the surge has been complete. For only 3 weeks have we had the full complement of troops as part of this surge. Already some things have happened militarily that are good in Iraq.

So before we get the general's report in September, without anything other than our own opinions from reading newspapers and watching TV and sitting in our air-conditioned offices, we are now going to come along and abrogate what this great Nation did 2 months ago because of some political pressure or some spot they saw on the evening news, placing our soldiers at risk, undermining the policies we are asking them to execute at this very moment. Even pushing for that at this time I think is irresponsible.

I wish to be on record as saying I understand the difficulties we are facing in Iraq. I understand the courage our soldiers are displaying. I understand the risks they are subjected to right now, and we want to see the situation improve. All of us do. But we voted for this policy. The surge has just started. We need to give General Petraeus a chance to proceed with it and not flop around irresponsibly and come up with a withdrawal policy that is so rapid that I am not even sure the military can effectively carry it out under the Levin amendment. As a matter of fact, they cannot effectively carry it out.

Mr. President, I guess we are still in morning business. I see my colleague, Senator NELSON from Florida, whom I respect so greatly. He chairs the Strategic Subcommittee of which I am pleased to be the ranking member.

I believe I am to be recognized in a few minutes on a separate amendment, but if Senator NELSON has some comments he would like to make at this time, I will consider yielding to him and see what our schedule is.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2008

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 1585, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 1585) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Nelson (NE) (for Levin) amendment No. 2011, in the nature of a substitute.

Nelson (FL) amendment No. 2013 (to amendment No. 2012), to change the enactment date.

Levin amendment No. 2087 (to amendment No. 2011), to provide for a reduction and transition of U.S. forces in Iraq.

Reed amendment No. 2088 (to amendment No. 2087), to change the enactment date.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. 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. LEVIN. 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. LEVIN. Mr. President, under the unanimous consent agreement that was entered into last night, a Senator designated on the Republican side was to offer an amendment at this time and then I was going to, or someone designated by me was going to offer a second-degree amendment.

I want Senator GRAHAM to say what the intention was on that side—that intention has been changed—and then I will comment on what he has to say.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Carolina.

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, I had intended to offer amendment No. 2064 to strike certain provisions of the bill regarding detainee procedures, legal procedures affecting detainees. I have been talking with Senator LEVIN and his staff to see if there is some common ground we can find about this CSRT process at Guantanamo Bay—Combatant Status Review Tribunals. There are some ideas that Senator LEVIN has that I am going to associate myself with.

I thought what we would do, I intend to reserve my ability to offer the amendment—and intend to do so unless we can find some common ground—and allow Senator SESSIONS to go forward on the Republican side. I will continue to work with my colleague, Senator LEVIN, to see if we can find some accommodation with regard to the subject matter in question, with the understanding, if we can, that we will do that at the appropriate time. If we cannot, I would like to be able to bring my amendment to strike back.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I thank my friend from South Carolina. That is our understanding. We understand what his intent was. We both have been involved in some discussions on this matter. Our staffs are involved in some discussions on this matter.

Senator GRAHAM has indicated his willingness to hold off offering his amendment at this time, with the understanding that he will have an opportunity at a later time to offer that amendment, and these discussions will continue in the interim.

Mr. GRAHAM. That is correct.

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

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

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, I understand the Senator from Alabama has an amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

AMENDMENT NO. 2024, AS MODIFIED, TO AMENDMENT NO. 2011

Mr. SESSIONS. I thank my colleague from Florida, Mr. NELSON, and I thank him for his leadership as chairman of the Strategic Subcommittee on the Armed Services Committee, of which I am the ranking member. I want to assert again that I have been pleased to work with him and value his judgment and insight, and value his insight with regard to amendment No. 2024, which I have filed a modification to, and I now ask that amendment, as modified, be called up at this time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Alabama [Mr. SESSIONS] proposes amendment numbered 2024, as modified.

The amendment is as follows:

At the end of subtitle B of title XII, add the following:

SEC. 1218. POLICY OF THE UNITED STATES ON PROTECTION OF THE UNITED STATES AND ITS ALLIES AGAINST IRANIAN BALLISTIC MISSILES.

(a) FINDING.—Congress finds that Iran maintains a nuclear program in continued defiance of the international community while developing ballistic missiles of increasing sophistication and range that pose a threat to both the forward-deployed forces of the United States and to its North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) allies in Europe; and which eventually could pose a threat to the United States homeland.

(b) POLICY OF THE UNITED STATES.—It is the policy of the United States—

(1) to develop and deploy, as soon as technologically possible, in conjunction with its allies and other nations whenever possible, effective defense against the threat from Iran described in subsection (a)(1) that will provide protection for the United States, its friends, and its North Atlantic Treaty Organization allies; and

(2) to proceed in the development of such response in a manner such that any missile defenses fielded by the United States in Europe are integrated with or complementary to missile defense capabilities that might be fielded by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in Europe.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Senators KYL, DOLE, INHOFE, and THUNE be added as cosponsors.

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

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, I don't know if my colleague from Florida wants to make a comment now.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. After the Senator.

Mr. SESSIONS. I will be glad to yield to Senator NELSON if he wishes to share some thoughts.

The amendment offered today, simply put, acknowledges that we have a growing threat to peace and security that arises from Iran's nuclear and missile program, and this amendment would make it the policy of the United States to develop effective defenses against this threat as soon as possible.

The amendment also emphasizes the need to ensure that the defenses we deploy are coordinated with existing programs of our NATO allies. A number of Senators and Members of the House want to be sure that we coordinate with the NATO allies, and this amendment would call for that.

Sadly, the Islamic Republic of Iran continues to threaten the United States and our allies and that threat must be recognized and confronted. My amendment signals the resolve of the United States to do that. At a time when Iran is openly threatening to destroy the United States and our various allies—and is providing weapons, such as explosively formed penetrators, or EFPs, which we have pretty clearly traced to Iran today, and that are killing our soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan—demonstrating our understanding of the seriousness of their threat and their purpose is critical for us to have clear thinking and sound policy. So I appreciate my colleagues, such as Senator LIEBERMAN, who spoke eloquently and offered an amendment on the need to confront Iran's support of worldwide terrorism, which we voted on yesterday—in a very strong vote.

I see missile defense as another facet of confronting and facing this threat. Even in the Middle East, where anti-Israel sentiments are all too common, Iran is the only country in the Middle East where the President openly calls for the destruction of Israel. Shortly after taking office in 2005, Ahmadi-Nejad, the President, rallied supporters at a conference, and the conference was called ''A World Without Zionism.'' In that speech he said, ''The current skirmishes in the occupied land are part of a war of destiny. The outcome of hundreds of years of war will be defined in Palestinian land. As the Imam said''—and here he is referring to the Ayatollah Khomeini—''Israel must be wiped off the map.''

But Israel isn't the only target of Iran's crash program to develop long-range missiles with nuclear warheads—long-range missiles they are now developing. He is developing also nuclear warheads. In the same speech Ahmadi-Nejad was quoted as saying this: ''Anybody who recognizes Israel will burn in the fire of the Islamic nation's fury.''

That includes, of course, the United States—us—and our allies in Europe and the Middle East. For anyone who doubts that Ahmadi-Nejad's threat was meant to include America, he has also been quoted as saying this: ''And God willing, with the force of God behind it, we shall soon experience a world without the United States and Zionism.''

A world without the United States. It does not get much more straightforward than that. Arnaud de Borchgrave, an experienced world observer and editor at large of the Washington Times and United Press International, had a piece in the Washington Times yesterday, and he pointed out some of the examples of the kind of extremism, real extremism, we have seen from the Iranian leadership.

Now, let me say this: The Iranian people are good people. They have quite an educated population, certainly for that area of the world. There is no need and no justification for Iranian leadership to betray those people, the people of that historic nation, with these kinds of policies. In truth, President Ahmadi-Nejad and certain clerics are damaging the history, the economy, the people, and the reputation of Iran. There is no reason for this. It should not continue. Unfortunately, it is reality. And while we can hope for change, change does not seem likely in the short run.

While the people of Iran may, and I think do, oppose this extremism, the President and the extremists, certain mullahs and others, seem to be firmly in control of the country and determined to pursue a radical and extremist ideology and policy. It is not only a tragedy for Iran that this is occurring but for the whole world.

Mr. de Borchgrave lists some of the statements that are more than sufficient to alert the world to the dangers and the intentions of the leaders of Iran today. This is what he wrote yesterday, and I quote:

> Whether Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadi-Nejad said he wants to wipe Israel off the map is still contested, even by anti-mullah Iranian-Americans. But that he wants to wipe out the Jewish state, there can be no doubt. As he completes his visits to every Iranian town, the collection of his pronunciamentos is edifying reading.
>
> Culled from a wide variety of sources, ranging from the Agence France Presse, the French national news agency, to the London Daily Telegraph, to the Suddeutsche Zeitung Online, to France's Le Monde and Liberation, Mr. Ahmadi-Nejad spells out the target and the strategy: ''This regime—here he is talking about Israel—will one day disappear. The Zionist regime is a rotten tree that will be blown away by one storm. The countdown for the destruction of Israel has begun. Zionists are the personification of Satan.''

He goes on to say:

> In the case of any unwise move by the fake regime of Israel, Iran's response will be so destructive and quick the regime will regret its move forever. The west invented the myth of the massacre of the Jews (in World War II) and placed it above Allah, religions, and profits.

So he continues to assert that the Holocaust was a myth, invented by the West.

What about his strategic plan?

> We don't shy away from declaring Islam is ready to rule the world. The wave of the Islamist revolution will soon reach the entire world. Our revolution's main mission is to pave the way for the reappearance of the 12th Imam, the Mahdi, a 5-year-old boy who vanished 1,100 years ago and who will lead the world into an era of peace and prosperity, but not before the planet is first convulsed by death and destruction.

He goes on to say:

> Soon, Islam will become the dominating force in the world occupying first place in the number of followers among other religions. Is there a craft more beautiful, more sublime, more divine than the craft of giving yourself to martyrdom and becoming holy? Do not doubt, Allah will prevail and Islam will conquer mountaintops of the entire world. Islam can recruit hundreds of suicide bombers a day. Suicide is an invincible weapon. Suicide bombers in this land showed us the way and they enlighten our future. The will to commit suicide is one of the best ways of life.

This is the President of a country that is steadfastly moving forward to develop nuclear weapons and steadfastly advancing its ability to launch intercontinental ballistic missiles.

What does he say about nuclear power?

> By the grace of Allah we will be a nuclear power and Iran does not give a damn about the IEA, the International Energy Agency, their demands to freeze enrichment of nuclear fuel. Iran does not give a damn about resolutions.

That is the U.N. Resolutions. Those are his words. There are other comments. He goes on to say, as I indicated earlier, at this conference on the world without Zionism—the President of Iran said:

> To those who doubt, to those who say it is not possible, I say accomplishment of a world without America and Israel is both possible and feasible.

You can say this is an exaggeration. You can say this is not realistic. But I suggest that is the repeated statements of the leader of a very dangerous nation, a nation with real capabilities. They are developing a nuclear capability and an expanding and growing missile capability. I think yesterday Senator LIEBERMAN, after the vote on his amendment, summed it up very well. This is what he said:

> The threat posed by Iran to our soldiers, to our allies, to our national security is a truth that cannot be wished or waved away. Congress today began the process of confronting it.

We also need to take one more step in that process by making clear that we are not going to leave our Nation or our allies in Europe vulnerable to any missile threats from Iran.

Most Senators were in the room a few weeks ago when the Director of National Intelligence, ADM Mike McConnell, gave us a classified briefing and described in detail the threat posed by Iran. Having received that briefing, I think few of us would doubt that Iran does pose a threat to the security of the United States and our allies. It is a threat to us. It is not something we need to be intimidated about. We don't need to back down to Iran. Militarily

there is no doubt in the mind of this Senator or any objective observer's mind what would happen if a conflict developed here. But we need to be realistic, we need to seek to avoid conflict, but we need to pursue policies that will make sure we don't allow our citizens to fall under a risk of a nuclear missile attack.

So they are pursuing, under Ahmadinejad's leadership, the means to kill millions of people with the single push of a button. When Iran's Shehab-3 missiles are paraded through the streets of Iran, they are draped with banners stating, ''Israel must be wiped off the map.'' That is what they put on their missiles. With a range of 1,300 kilometers and a payload capacity of over 700 kilograms, the Shehab-3 has the capacities to implement Ahmadi-Nejad's genocidal agenda. Iran is also working hard to develop missiles that can reach Europe and the States. The Shehab-4 is well along in development and will reportedly be able to reach most of continental Europe. The Shehab-5 and Shehab-6 have also been discussed in open sources. They are developing those advanced missiles. These sources claim these models will have the capacity to reach the eastern seaboard of the United States.

Iran's ability to develop nuclear warheads for those missiles are proceeding apace as well. In April, in a speech at the Natanz nuclear enrichment facility, there in Iran, Ahmadi-Nejad stated:

> I declare that as of today our dear country has joined the nuclear club of nations and can produce nuclear fuel on an industrial scale.

International Atomic Energy Agency later confirmed that Iranian enrichment capabilities were developing rapidly while our knowledge and understanding of their nuclear program was decreasing. This uncertainty is very disturbing.

Yesterday, the Washington Post reported the construction of an underground tunnel complex near its enrichment facilities at Natanz. It appears, therefore, that Iran is preparing to protect and hide its nuclear capabilities.

Nothing about Iran's behavior recently suggests that it will use these capabilities in a responsible manner. In fact, to the contrary, we expect Ahmadinejad to use nuclear-tipped missiles to threaten, blackmail, and terrorize the nations that oppose its radical agenda and using them, actually using them based on some of the extreme statements he has made, cannot be placed out of the question.

We all remember last March when Iran seized 15 British sailors and held them as hostages. Imagine a time in the not-too-distant future when Iran could take the whole city of London as a hostage with a nuclear threat. According to reports in the Washington Post, the intelligence community assesses that Iran's ICBMs and its nuclear weapons capability will both mature in 2015. That is not that far away. As a result, the cities of the eastern seaboard and of Europe are expected to face the threat of nuclear attack from Iran in less than 8 years.

Keep in mind that 2015 is the midpoint of the estimated range. Iran's capability could come online in 2017, later, or even by 2013, if things proceed faster than expected. That may seem like a long way away, but an adequate defense will take a long time to build and we need to start now. According to the Missile Defense Agency, even if Congress fully funded the European defense site—which I hope that we will. We refer to it as the ''third site,'' and it is funded every year—the system would not be up and running until 2013. Any delay to that schedule—which could happen for a number of reasons—could open up a window of vulnerability during which Iran would have the means to attack us and our allies, perhaps with nuclear weapons, and we will have no means of defending the American people or our allies against them.

The good news is we have it in our power to prevent this window of vulnerability and keep it from opening if we commit as a nation to doing so. My amendment represents an opportunity for the Senate to go on record with such a commitment. An effective missile defense, which we would promptly begin to deploy, could convince the Iranian leadership that developing such missiles for their nuclear weapons is a futile undertaking. Perhaps we may have already missed, however, that opportunity to actually deter them in this way, making it all the more important that we get moving on development of the means to defend ourselves and our allies.

This amendment is more than about setting U.S. policy on missile defense, it is about sending a message to the rest of the world, our friends and enemies alike, that we take this Iranian threat seriously and we intend to stand up to it. The debate over the third site is being watched with great interest around the world. Some may be drawing conclusions about our commitment to meet this threat head on and doubting that we are committed. In fact, I will note that we effectively deployed and continue to upgrade a national missile defense system that can meet the North Korean missile threat, which is somewhat more advanced than Iran's but not a lot. We know we have this capability and we should do it with Iran also.

Imagine sitting in Mr. Ahmadinejad's shoes today. He provides sophisticated weapons to our enemies in Iraq, killing hundreds of American troops in the process. In response, one of our colleagues proposed legislation to prohibit the President from attacking Iran without congressional authorization. Ahmadinejad rushes headlong toward a nuclear weapon and long-range delivery capability and both the Senate and the House cut funding for missile defenses that could neutralize the threat. Ahmadi-Nejad must not feel like his bluster and threats will be effective.

They will not be. Imagine the conclusions that Vladimir Putin is drawing from those media reports. In February of 2007, Mr. Putin and the Russian Army Chief of Staff, Yury Baluyevsky, threatened to unilaterally withdraw from the Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty, which prohibits the United States and Russia from deploying arsenals of short- and medium-range missiles in Europe. Mr. Putin later suspended Russia's obligations under the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty, which historically allowed NATO and the Warsaw Pact to remove much of the military personnel and material that was arrayed along Europe's central front during the height of the Cold War.

Finally, in June of this year, Putin directly threatened to focus Russia's nuclear arsenal on ''new targets in Europe.'' Putin claimed that ''the strategic balance in the world is being upset'' and that Russia ''will be creating a system of countering that anti-missile system.''

These threats coincided with Russian tests of an advanced ICBM, the RS–24, by Russia.

It ought not. Of course, any third site in Europe will be ineffective against the massive missile capability of Russia. We don't have any capability of doing that. We can create a system that will be very effective against anything the Iranians can do in the decades to come but not Russia. Our plans have no intention of affecting Russia. But we also need not be affected by Mr. Putin's bluster or that we be slowed down in our legitimate interests in protecting our country and our allies from Iranian threats by these kinds of comments from the Russians.

We reduced somewhat—not greatly—but $84 million in funding for the third site in Europe. Colleagues felt that money could not be effectively spent. They did not believe it was necessary in this year's budget. The problem might be that some would conclude the action by our committee in taking those steps to trim the budget would be a plan to kill missile defenses in Europe.

Yesterday, an article in the Christian Science Monitor entitled ''Obstacles Ahead for Missile Defense,'' stated the Senate was opposed to building defenses against Iranian missiles, in effect, saying:

> In Washington, the Democratic-controlled Congress appears reluctant to fund the move, scrambling its near-term prospects.

I don't think that is true. I think there is bipartisan support for creating a missile defense system, but a firm belief exists on the part of my Democratic colleagues that we should not go so fast that it is not done wisely.

We have reached a proposal in the legislation as written that we can live with. However, there has been some confusion as to our seriousness in this commitment.

In fact, on July 5 the Washington Post ran an article entitled, ''Senate Panel Faults Missile Defense Plan.'' In the article, the Post states:

Democrats in Congress are building a legislative roadblock for the Bush administration's plan to place elements of a missile defense system in Poland and the Czech Republic.

It is an incorrect perception. It undermines our alliance relationships by causing our allies to think we are not committed in a serious way to building a missile defense system that would be effective against Iranian attacks and be protective of Europe. So I think it is therefore incumbent upon us to clarify the Senate's stance.

The Poles and the Czechs and other NATO allies have all undertaken the momentous challenge of winning over their populations to the idea of American missile defenses in Europe. They have battled anti-Americanism, pressure from Europe and Russia, because they value our friendship, but more importantly because they realize Europe may soon be vulnerable to Iranian nuclear intimidation and potential nuclear attack unless steps are taken to develop defenses now.

I think it would be a slap in the face and unbefitting to our Nation if we were to pull the rug out from under these projects after our allies have stepped up and been supportive of them. We cannot stand idly by, my colleagues, when a madman threatens to destroy the United States and to wipe from the map allies of the United States, then defies the international community by developing the means to carry out these threats.

We are the most powerful military in the world, but some people doubt our seriousness and our commitment. In the Middle East, in particular, this perception of weakness can be a fatal error. So I think it is appropriate for us to make clear to Iran and to Russia and to our allies worldwide that we understand that the Iranian danger is clear and present.

We must leave no uncertainty in anyone's mind that we intend to defend ourselves and our allies from this threat. Our security, the security of our allies, and the credibility of our commitments are all at stake. I will just add that while the Iranian actions are very troubling, they should be taken very seriously. Iran's words cannot be ignored.

I would say one thing further. We have no reason to be intimidated by Iran. We have the capability of defending ourselves, our military, and our interests, and the leaders in Iran need to know this. This Senator is prepared to take whatever steps are necessary to defend our national interests.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, with regard to the Sessions amendment, it would establish a U.S. policy concerning defense against Iranian ballistic missiles stating that the United States will develop and deploy effectively defenses against Iranian ballistic missiles as soon as technologically possible.

I think everyone agrees with that idea. I would suggest that this is effectively our policy today, and, indeed, is the policy of the bill and is so stated in the bill before us, that we are already developing and deploying a number of missile defense programs to provide such effective defenses.

For example, the United States has already deployed the Patriot PAC–3 system to the region to provide defensive capability for our forward-deployed forces in the region. We are also developing and deploying the AEGIS BMD system, and we are developing the THAAD system. All of these systems will provide effective defense capability against Iran's existing and near-term missile capabilities.

However, we do not have sufficient capability today with these systems to provide the level of protection that our combatant commanders need. Our senior military commanders readily acknowledge that fact, including the combatant commander of the U.S. Strategic Command, General Cartwright. He is responsible for global integrated missile defense. He readily acknowledges that fact.

For that reason, the bill before the Senate authorizes an additional $315 million to increase or accelerate these three crucial near-term missile defense programs. And what they do is to provide increased protection for our forward-deployed forces, our allies, and our friends in the region.

In other words, we are already putting this policy in effect. That is the true measure of our determination to provide effective defenses against Iran's ballistic missiles.

Now, I understand the Republican leader wants to make a statement.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, would the Senator yield 1 minute for my response?

I thank Senator NELSON for his comments. I agree with him that, properly read, our legislation does what he says. But I even had a military person think that perhaps we had done something to weaken our commitment. I think others, such as the Washington Post, may have overinterpreted some of the things that are in that language. I believe this would be a good way to clarify our policy. I thank him for his leadership.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, before I speak on the amendment concerning the withdrawal from Iraq offered by Senator LEVIN, I would like to make a few comments about the benchmarks report required by the supplemental bill that was signed in May and released by the President just this morning.

We knew when the Senate passed the conference report that according to the legislation we were requiring a benchmark report in July and a benchmark report in September. Why were these dates important? First, we knew that July was important because the Baghdad security plan is now fully manned, something that was achieved less than 1 month ago.

Congress wanted to send a clear signal to the Iraqi Government that full cooperation and sacrifice in executing the Baghdad security plan was imperative and that the hard work of political compromise must begin. We have done that.

Second, General Petraeus informed the Senate that he and Ambassador Crocker would provide an assessment of the counterinsurgency plan to the President, as we all know, in September. Having heard that, the Senate thought it reasonable that we would be provided the same assessment and that we could form a reasoned legislative response to that report.

What have we learned? We have learned that progress is mixed, that many of our military tasks assigned to the military have been achieved, and that we have not seen sufficient progress on the political benchmarks. The Congress decided in May that 1 month of a fully manned surge was an insufficient period to call the Petraeus plan a success or a failure. Certainly, the young soldiers and marines risking their lives today on the streets of Baghdad and Ramadi would agree, and they deserve our patience.

Some of our colleagues have quite reasonably refrained from drafting new amendments that would revisit the actions taken by this Senate back in May until they have at least reviewed the benchmarks report delivered just today.

I would encourage my colleagues to review the report, as I intend to, and to hear what General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker have to say in September. There is much at stake and, frankly, they deserve to be heard.

AMENDMENT NO. 2087

Now on another matter, Mr. President, the Senate will soon take up the Levin amendment. But before we do, I think it is important that we take a look at what it says.

The Levin amendment says:

The Secretary of Defense shall commence the reduction of the number of United States forces in Iraq not later than 120 days after the date of enactment of the enactment of this Act.

Now, exactly what would this reduction involve—10,000 troops, 20,000, 50,000, all of them? Can we at least get maybe a ballpark figure? The Levin amendment does not quite give us one. It only says U.S. forces will have a ''limited presence'' after this reduction. What is a ''limited presence''?

Does it mean limiting our presence in Al Anbar, which everyone agrees has been a stunning success in our fight against al-Qaida? Does it mean limiting our presence in Baghdad? In the

Kurdish areas to the north? What does ''limited presence'' mean? The Levin amendment does not say. We are left to guess.

The Levin amendment says the members of our Armed Forces will only be free to protect the United States and coalition personnel and infrastructure, to train Iraqi security forces, and to engage in targeted counterterrorism operations against al-Qaida. What does ''targeted'' mean? The Levin amendment does not tell us.

It says:

The Secretary of Defense shall complete the transition of United States forces to a limited presence and missions by April 30.

But how will we know when he has completed the transition? And how many forces would have to be moved in order for the Secretary of Defense to comply with the bill's mandate to complete it? The amendment is silent on that question as well.

If there were more to this amendment, I might have more questions, but there is not. That is it. The supposedly groundbreaking policy shift that the Democratic majority has been circling around is nothing more than a page and a half of vague policy proposals; in fact, an empty shell. Do they really expect us to send this to conference and to see what might happen? That is wise war policy? That is a responsible alternative to the current policy? That is the alternative they give us to the Petraeus plan, a doctrine that has been widely acclaimed as the last word on counterinsurgency, which is showing signs of success less than a month after it was fully manned?

Look, Democrats and Republicans voted to go into Iraq based on the same intelligence the President had. It is dishonest and it is unhelpful to turn every debate on this war into a discussion of how and why we entered it in the first place.

More than 150,000 American troops are there. They are now fighting the same group that attacked and killed thousands of innocent Americans on 9/11, who attacked many others before and since, and who are plotting to kill thousands more even as we speak. There is one thing we should be concerned about in discussing this war, and it is the one thing we never hear about from the other side; that is, inning the fight against al-Qaida.

Now, the President has recognized that previous strategy failed to focus on the insurgency and al-Qaida. He changed course. Now we are fighting them head on with the Petraeus plan. At full manning, this strategy has been in place for less than a month. We will get a report on its progress in September. What sense does it make to short-circuit that strategy right now, especially when the only alternative we are getting from the other side is a page and a half of questions.

Yesterday, the spokesman for the Multi-National Force in Iraq gave us an update on al-Qaida's operations in Iraq. He reminded us that al-Qaida members refer to Iraq as their central front. This is al-Qaida members who say it is their central front. He told us al-Qaida and its affiliates are the greatest source of the spectacular attacks that are fueling sectarian violence in Iraq.

He told us that in recent months, more and more Iraqis have started to reject al-Qaida and its ideology and are finally fighting back. Troops are getting good, actionable intelligence from these people which they are using to disrupt al-Qaida networks and safe havens in and around Baghdad. He showed us a chart that illustrated some of our recent successes against the enemy. Our Armed Forces in Iraq killed or captured 26 high-level al-Qaida leaders in May and June alone. Eleven of them were emirs who were city or local al-Qaida leaders; seven were smuggling foreigners, weapons, and money into Iraq; five were cell leaders; and three were leaders of IED networks. Last month, our troops uncovered an al-Qaida media hub near Samarra. They have concluded that between 80 and 90 percent of suicide attacks in Iraq are carried out by foreign-born terrorists who have killed some 4,000 Iraqi citizens just over the last 6 months.

These are some of the concrete realities on the ground. This is what is actually happening, not what people over here seem to be talking about. We are fighting al-Qaida head-on, and we are making progress. Would the Levin amendment force us to turn our backs on al-Qaida again? We have no idea. It really doesn't say. But it could. That is something we should all keep in mind as we begin this debate, whether we are willing to go with this or with the Petraeus plan.

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, I support the provisions in the 2008 Defense authorization bill that seek to prevent premature deployment of missile defenses in Europe, and I continue to have serious concerns about the operational effectiveness and cost of these technologies. I voted for the amendment offered by Senator SESSIONS because Iran may develop the capacity to threaten our allies with nuclear weapons and because the amendment supports development of an ''effective defense'' when it is ''technologically possible.'' I will continue encouraging the administration to work with the international community to engage directly with Iran.

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. LEVIN. 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. LEVIN. I ask unanimous consent that the Sessions amendment No. 2024, as modified, be set aside until 4 p.m. today and that no amendment be in order to the Sessions amendment; that at 4 p.m. today, there be 2 minutes of debate equally divided and controlled between Senator SESSIONS and myself or our designees; that upon the use of that time, without further intervening action or debate, the Senate proceed to vote in relation to the Sessions amendment, as modified.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. MCCAIN. Reserving the right to object, I will not object, but I would like to clarify with the chairman that we intend to not only take up the wounded warrior amendment but also, if there are other amendments, if we debate and discuss wounded warrior and there is time for that—we want to tell our colleagues that there are some 98 pending amendments that have not been addressed as of yet, and we would like to address those as soon as possible since we will obviously have a very busy week on this bill next week as well as today. We have 4½ hours between now and the next vote.

My other question to the distinguished chairman is, Is it his desire that we perhaps have another amendment that could be voted on at that time?

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I thank my friend from Arizona. It is our hope that we can complete the debate on the wounded warriors legislation. I did intend to offer that as soon as this unanimous consent agreement is agreed to. Those who wish to speak on the wounded warrior legislation we invite to come to the floor in the next few hours. If the debate on that legislation is completed before 4 o'clock, the Senator from Arizona is correct, we would then, hopefully, have a vote on the wounded warriors amendment immediately after the vote on the Sessions amendment. If debate on the wounded warriors legislation is completed before 4 o'clock, as he indicated, there would then be an opportunity for another amendment to be offered as designated by the ranking member. I believe, in terms of alternating, it is now our turn. I will be offering, on behalf of many Senators, on a bipartisan basis the wounded warrior legislation. Then it is our understanding the next amendment would be from the Republican side.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection to the unanimous consent request?

Mr. MCCAIN. I thank the Senator from Michigan. I understand there were already several amendments to the wounded warrior legislation, which have been accepted on both sides, which we will be presenting. I would ask the indulgence of the chairman to make a brief statement before we take up the wounded warrior amendment bill. Would that be OK? It is not on wounded warrior.

Mr. LEVIN. I have no objection whatsoever to Senator MCCAIN being recognized immediately after our UC is accepted—if it is—for a statement. Then it would be the understanding that I

would then be recognized to introduce the wounded warrior amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection to the unanimous consent request?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. LEVIN. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I thank my colleague and friend from Michigan. I know he shares my concern about the work that needs to be done in the next few days to try to get this bill completed. We do urge our colleagues to come forth with relevant amendments. As I mentioned, there are at this time, obviously, a number of amendments my colleagues will want considered and debated, including two very big amendments on Iraq, the Salazar-Alexander amendment, as well as the Reed-Levin amendment which I am sure will take up considerable time. Before we move to the wounded warrior bill, which I praise for its bipartisanship and its effort to bring together both sides of the aisle to address one of the most compelling issues of our time, and that is the treatment of the men and women who are serving in the military—I will have more remarks about that later—I would like to draw my colleagues' attention to an editorial that ran last Sunday in the New York Times titled ''The Road Home.''

I ask unanimous consent to have that editorial printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the New York Times, July 8, 2007]

THE ROAD HOME

It is time for the United States to leave Iraq, without any more delay than the Pentagon needs to organize an orderly exit.

Like many Americans, we have put off that conclusion, waiting for a sign that President Bush was seriously trying to dig the United States out of the disaster he created by invading Iraq without sufficient cause, in the face of global opposition, and without a plan to stabilize the country afterward.

At first, we believed that after destroying Iraq's government, army, police and economic structures, the United States was obliged to try to accomplish some of the goals Mr. Bush claimed to be pursuing, chiefly building a stable, unified Iraq. When it became clear that the president had neither the vision nor the means to do that, we argued against setting a withdrawal date while there was still some chance to mitigate the chaos that would most likely follow.

While Mr. Bush scorns deadlines, he kept promising breakthroughs—after elections, after a constitution, after sending in thousands more troops. But those milestones came and went without any progress toward a stable, democratic Iraq or a path for withdrawal. It is frighteningly clear that Mr. Bush's plan is to stay the course as long as he is president and dump the mess on his successor. Whatever his cause was, it is lost.

The political leaders Washington has backed are incapable of putting national interests ahead of sectarian score settling. The security forces Washington has trained behave more like partisan militias. Additional military forces poured into the Baghdad region have failed to change anything.

Continuing to sacrifice the lives and limbs of American soldiers is wrong. The war is sapping the strength of the nation's alliances and its military forces. It is a dangerous diversion from the life-and-death struggle against terrorists. It is an increasing burden on American taxpayers, and it is a betrayal of a world that needs the wise application of American power and principles.

A majority of Americans reached these conclusions months ago. Even in politically polarized Washington, positions on the war no longer divide entirely on party lines. When Congress returns this week, extricating American troops from the war should be at the top of its agenda.

That conversation must be candid and focused. Americans must be clear that Iraq, and the region around it, could be even bloodier and more chaotic after Americans leave. There could be reprisals against those who worked with American forces, further ethnic cleansing, even genocide. Potentially destabilizing refugee flows could hit Jordan and Syria. Iran and Turkey could be tempted to make power grabs. Perhaps most important, the invasion has created a new stronghold from which terrorist activity could proliferate.

The administration, the Democratic-controlled Congress, the United Nations and America's allies must try to mitigate those outcomes—and they may fail. But Americans must be equally honest about the fact that keeping troops in Iraq will only make things worse. The nation needs a serious discussion, now, about how to accomplish a withdrawal and meet some of the big challenges that will arise.

The United States has about 160,000 troops and millions of tons of military gear inside Iraq. Getting that force out safely will be a formidable challenge. The main road south to Kuwait is notoriously vulnerable to roadside bomb attacks. Soldiers, weapons and vehicles will need to be deployed to secure bases while airlift and sealift operations are organized. Withdrawal routes will have to be guarded. The exit must be everything the invasion was not: based on reality and backed by adequate resources.

The United States should explore using Kurdish territory in the north of Iraq as a secure staging area. Being able to use bases and ports in Turkey would also make withdrawal faster and safer. Turkey has been an inconsistent ally in this war, but like other nations, it should realize that shouldering part of the burden of the aftermath is in its own interest.

Accomplishing all of this in less than six months is probably unrealistic. The political decision should be made, and the target date set, now.

Despite President Bush's repeated claims, Al Qaeda had no significant foothold in Iraq before the invasion, which gave it new base camps, new recruits and new prestige.

This war diverted Pentagon resources from Afghanistan, where the military had a real chance to hunt down Al Qaeda's leaders. It alienated essential allies in the war against terrorism. It drained the strength and readiness of American troops.

And it created a new front where the United States will have to continue to battle terrorist forces and enlist local allies who reject the idea of an Iraq hijacked by international terrorists. The military will need resources and bases to stanch this self-inflicted wound for the foreseeable future.

The United States could strike an agreement with the Kurds to create those bases in northeastern Iraq. Or, the Pentagon could use its bases in countries like Kuwait and Qatar, and its large naval presence in the Persian Gulf, as staging points.

There are arguments for, and against, both options. Leaving troops in Iraq might make it too easy—and too tempting—to get drawn back into the civil war and confirm suspicions that Washington's real goal was to secure permanent bases in Iraq. Mounting attacks from other countries could endanger those nations' governments.

The White House should make this choice after consultation with Congress and the other countries in the region, whose opinions the Bush administration has essentially ignored. The bottom line: the Pentagon needs enough force to stage effective raids and airstrikes against terrorist forces in Iraq, but not enough to resume large-scale combat.

One of Mr. Bush's arguments against withdrawal is that it would lead to civil war. That war is raging, right now, and it may take years to burn out. Iraq may fragment into separate Kurdish, Sunni and Shiite republics, and American troops are not going to stop that from happening.

It is possible, we suppose, that announcing a firm withdrawal date might finally focus Iraq's political leaders and neighboring governments on reality. Ideally, it could spur Iraqi politicians to take the steps toward national reconciliation that they have endlessly discussed but refused to act on.

But it is foolish to count on that, as some Democratic proponents of withdrawal have done. The administration should use whatever leverage it gains from withdrawing to press its allies and Iraq's neighbors to help achieve a negotiated solution.

Iraq's leaders—knowing that they can no longer rely on the Americans to guarantee their survival—might be more open to compromise, perhaps to a Bosnian-style partition, with economic resources fairly shared but with millions of Iraqis forced to relocate. That would be better than the slow-motion ethnic and religious cleansing that has contributed to driving one in seven Iraqis from their homes.

The United States military cannot solve the problem. Congress and the White House must lead an international attempt at a negotiated outcome. To start, Washington must turn to the United Nations, which Mr. Bush spurned and ridiculed as a preface to war.

There are already nearly two million Iraqi refugees, mostly in Syria and Jordan, and nearly two million more Iraqis who have been displaced within their country. Without the active cooperation of all six countries bordering Iraq—Turkey, Iran, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Syria—and the help of other nations, this disaster could get worse. Beyond the suffering, massive flows of refugees—some with ethnic and political resentments—could spread Iraq's conflict far beyond Iraq's borders.

Kuwait and Saudi Arabia must share the burden of hosting refugees. Jordan and Syria, now nearly overwhelmed with refugees, need more international help. That, of course, means money. The nations of Europe and Asia have a stake and should contribute. The United States will have to pay a large share of the costs, but should also lead international efforts, perhaps a donors' conference, to raise money for the refugee crisis.

Washington also has to mend fences with allies. There are new governments in Britain, France and Germany that did not participate in the fight over starting this war and are eager to get beyond it. But that will still require a measure of humility and a commitment to multilateral action that this administration has never shown. And, however angry they were with President Bush for creating this mess, those nations should see that they cannot walk away from the consequences. To put it baldly, terrorism and oil make it impossible to ignore.

The United States has the greatest responsibilities, including the admission of many more refugees for permanent resettlement.

The most compelling obligation is to the tens of thousands of Iraqis of courage and good will—translators, embassy employees, reconstruction workers—whose lives will be in danger because they believed the promises and cooperated with the Americans.

One of the trickiest tasks will be avoiding excessive meddling in Iraq by its neighbors—America's friends as well as its adversaries.

Just as Iran should come under international pressure to allow Shiites in southern Iraq to develop their own independent future, Washington must help persuade Sunni powers like Syria not to intervene on behalf of Sunni Iraqis. Turkey must be kept from sending troops into Kurdish territories.

For this effort to have any remote chance, Mr. Bush must drop his resistance to talking with both Iran and Syria. Britain, France, Russia, China and other nations with influence have a responsibility to help. Civil war in Iraq is a threat to everyone, especially if it spills across Iraq's borders.

President Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney have used demagoguery and fear to quell Americans' demands for an end to this war. They say withdrawing will create bloodshed and chaos and encourage terrorists. Actually, all of that has already happened—the result of this unnecessary invasion and the incompetent management of this war.

This country faces a choice. We can go on allowing Mr. Bush to drag out this war without end or purpose. Or we can insist that American troops are withdrawn as quickly and safely as we can manage—with as much effort as possible to stop the chaos from spreading.

Mr. McCAIN. It is worth spending a few moments to discuss this editorial because it is not often that one of America's flagship papers declares as lost a war which 160,000 brave American soldiers are trying mightily to win.

Beginning with its first line in this remarkable editorial, ''It is time for the United States to leave Iraq without any more delay than the Pentagon needs to organize an orderly exit,'' the Times editorial advocates a precipitous withdrawal of American forces. It does so conceding that such a withdrawal is likely to increase the chaos and bloodshed in Iraq, not decrease it, and that a redeployment could prompt ''reprisals, further ethnic cleansing, even genocide.'' A remarkable statement that a newspaper that frequently calls for the United States to bring its national power to bear for moral purposes, not the least of which in the Darfur region of Sudan, could so easily throw out consequences that are so terrible.

In the opinion of the New York Times, apparently genocide is not worth fighting to prevent, nor is it worth fighting to prevent ''potentially destabilizing refugee flows'' hitting Jordan and Syria or to stop Iran from filling the power vacuum left behind by our departure or disrupting a likely terrorist sanctuary. No, none of these things are worth fighting for in the Times' opinion because it has concluded that ''keeping troops in Iraq will only make things worse.''

This misunderstanding clouds the entirety of the editorial. The Times appears to believe that because things have been mismanaged since 2003 and because violence remains at unacceptably high levels, things simply can't get worse, so we should withdraw and at least save ourselves. But this is sheer folly. Things in Iraq, however bad they have been and remain, could get far, far worse. Anyone who recalls Cambodia or Rwanda or any of the other places that have seen killing on a massive scale knows just how terrible violence can be when it spirals out of control.

The consequences of a precipitous withdrawal from Iraq include emboldening terrorists, inducing a wider regional war, fanning the flames of a Sunni-Shia conflict, putting millions of lives at risk, and destabilizing an area key to America's strategic interests.

The editorial States bluntly, ''Whatever [the President's] cause was, it is lost,'' because ''additional military forces poured into the Baghdad region have failed to change anything.'' That is a remarkable statement, a remarkable statement. ''Additional military forces poured into the Baghdad region have failed to change anything.'' I just came back from a visit. I know I have been pilloried for saying that there has been progress in Iraq. Well, they can pillory General Petraeus and they can pillory their own reporters who have clearly pointed out that there have been measurements of success—and a long, long way to go, but the fact is, there has been some success.

The fact is, in Baghdad, as General Petraeus attests, it is demonstrably untrue that additional military forces poured into the Baghdad region have failed to change anything. In Baghdad, U.S. military and Iraqi forces are establishing joint security stations and patrolling the city together to manage violence. Since January, sectarian violence has fallen. The total number of car bombings and suicide attacks has declined in May and June, and the number of Iraqis coming forward with information is rising.

The President offered an assessment today. There are some areas of success. There are some areas of no movement, and there are some areas of failure, particularly where the Iraqi Government is concerned. We should know that. In an area south of Bagdad, commanders report increasing numbers of local tribes siding with the coalition against al-Qaida and similar effects north of the city.

This editorial makes the breathtaking assertion that the war in Iraq is ''a dangerous diversion from the life-and-death struggle against terrorists.'' Someone from the editorial board must have neglected to inform our troops on the ground, who, when I visited them last week in Baghdad and Anbar, spent several hours briefing me on their counterterrorism operations. The editors must have also neglected to speak with General Petraeus, who has called Iraq ''the central front of al-Qaida's global campaign.''

In case terrorists remain in Iraq and seek to plan attacks outside the country, the Times has an answer. The United States can set up bases in Kuwait and Qatar and even in northern Iraq because:

. . . the Pentagon needs enough force to stage effective raids and airstrikes against terrorist forces in Iraq.

Yet I wonder whether the Times has thought through any of the logistical issues associated with waging a counterterrorism effort from a neighboring country. Do we send American counterterrorism teams into Iraq for these operations? Do they remain in place? How are they supplied? We have seen for 3½ years that such efforts are much less successful when our troops are confined to forward operating bases than when our soldiers are deployed among the population, in the cities. I can hardly imagine how difficult it would be to wage the same struggle not from forward operating bases but from a neighboring nation.

These troops would not be needed to help stop an incipient civil war because, as the Times tells us, ''that war is raging, right now.'' Iraq may fragment into separate states, the editorial goes on, but ''American troops are not going to stop that from happening.''

Well, a couple days ago, Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari explained that the dangers of a quick American pullout from Iraq could include a civil war. I suspect the foreign minister means a real, full-scale civil war, one that dwarfs the violence taking place today. I also suspect the foreign minister understands there is no clear delineation between sectarian violence, whether or not it constitutes civil war, and terrorist activity. Al-Qaida bombed the mosque in Samara in a deliberate attempt to foment sectarian violence. Zarqawi wrote of his plans to target the Shia before his own death. Walking away from Iraq would not simply leave an ongoing sectarian struggle simmering away at its own pace, sealed off from the world. Civil war in Iraq has real implications for American national security interests.

After the withdrawal prompts the terrible consequences that even the New York Times foresees, it will be incumbent upon the United States to ameliorate the fallout. This, the editorial page tells us, can be done by talking to Iran—by talking to Iran—to pressure it to ''allow Shiites in southern Iraq to develop their own independent future.''

At a time when Iranian operatives are already moving weapons, training fighters, providing resources, and helping plan operations to kill American soldiers and damage our efforts to bring stability to Iraq, I think it is a pretty safe bet that Tehran will not be open to many of Washington's entreaties following a withdrawal. The much more likely course is that Iran will comfortably step into the power vacuum left by a U.S. redeployment. When it does so, though, the Times would have Washington ''persuade Sunni powers like Syria not to intervene on behalf of Sunni Iraqis.'' My

friends, that would be a tough sell, to put it mildly, if the Iranians are in the regional ascendance.

Perhaps the root of the New York Times' misconception of the war in Iraq is crystallized by a sentence in its final paragraph. It expresses fierce opposition to ''allowing Mr. Bush to drag out this war without end on purpose.'' ''Allowing Mr. Bush to drag out this war without end on purpose.'' I think all of us would oppose any war without end or purpose, but this does not describe the conflict in Iraq. We remain in Iraq to bring enough security to allow the Government to function in a way that will protect the people of Iraq and, as a result, the national interests of the United States. That is the purpose and the end goal of this war, as I see it.

But do not take my word for it, Mr. President. Ask the thousands of brave men and women who are putting themselves in harm's way every day. I had the privilege to once again visit many of them in Iraq last week, and I can tell my colleagues they understand the purpose. I wish I could say the same of our journalistic friends in New York.

Mr. President, I wish to remind my colleagues about the statements that have been made by various people who are experts on Iraq and are respected national security advisers, including people such as Brent Scowcroft and Henry Kissinger, and many others who have been involved in this issue, many of whom, like General Zinni, were opposed from the beginning to the conflict but now believe setting a date for withdrawal will be a disaster of monumental consequences.

I hope the editorial page of the New York Times would listen to some of those people. For example, Henry Kissinger, who recently said that setting a date for withdrawal will lead to chaos in the region; including people such as General Zinni, who had opposed our intervention in Iraq to start with, who said setting a date for withdrawal would have catastrophic consequences.

I have seen some interesting op-ed pieces in my time. I have rarely seen one that is farther off the mark than the editorial in last Sunday's New York Times. I am convinced that if we pursued that course, as the editorial leads: that the war is lost, and it is time for the United States to leave Iraq without any more delay, and the Pentagon needs to organize an orderly exit—is a remarkable statement by one of the largest newspapers in America.

Henry Kissinger—I think we can find wisdom in several suggestions put forward by him. But we also should heed his words, as well as many others. He is correct to say: ''precipitate withdrawal would produce a disaster,'' one that ''would not end the war but shift it to other areas, like Lebanon or Jordan or Saudi Arabia,'' produce greater violence among Iraqi factions and ''embolden radical Islamism'' around the world.

My friends, I hope the editorial writers for the New York Times would pay attention to Ayman al-Zawahiri, al-Qaida's deputy chief, who said that the United States is merely delaying our ''inevitable'' defeat in Iraq, and that ''the Mujahideen of Islam in Iraq of the caliphate and jihad are advancing with steady steps towards victory.''

Their target is not Iraq. Pay attention to their words. Their target is the United States of America.

Recall the plan laid out in a letter from Zawahiri to Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi before his death. That plan is to take shape in four stages: establish a caliphate in Iraq, extend the jihad wave to the secular countries neighboring Iraq, clash with Israel—none of which will commence until the completion of stage one—expel the Americans from Iraq.

If the New York Times editorial board does not pay attention to the words of people like me and General Scowcroft and General Zinni and Dr. Kissinger, and many other people who are experts, I would hope they would pay attention to the words of Zarqawi, Zawahiri, and others who have made very clear what their intentions are in Iraq.

Mr. President, at this time I yield the floor and ask unanimous consent that Senator LEVIN offer the wounded warrior legislation or whatever he wants.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The senior Senator from Michigan.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I did not have a chance, because the Senator was speaking, to ask the Senator from Arizona if there would be any objection if instead of offering the wounded warrior amendment at this time that I yield to the Senator from North Dakota for a statement on an amendment, a different amendment that he intends to offer. I think his statement would last 15 minutes or 20 minutes.

Mr. MCCAIN. How long?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Does the Senator from Arizona withdraw his unanimous consent request?

Mr. MCCAIN. I withdraw it. I just wonder how long, again.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, 15 or 20 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator withdraws the unanimous consent request.

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, could I ask the Senator from Michigan to amend the request to immediately following the remarks of the Senator from North Dakota that then there would be the offering of the wounded warrior amendment?

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senator from North Dakota be recognized for up to 20 minutes to speak on an amendment that he would intend to offer at a later time, and immediately following that I then be recognized to offer the wounded warrior legislation.

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

The Senator from North Dakota is recognized for up to 20 minutes.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, let me thank my colleague from Michigan and my colleague from Arizona as well.

I believe my colleague, Senator CONRAD from North Dakota, may well join me, if he is able to.

I want to describe an amendment we have filed. We will attempt to offer it at some point, but I have filed an amendment, along with my colleague, Senator CONRAD, and I want to describe it briefly. As I do, let me say this: I understand, and have always understood, it is far easier, when making a case, to make the negative side than the positive side. I understand, and have always understood, it is easier to recognize failure than it is to recognize success. I respect everyone's views on this issue, this issue of the war in Iraq, the fight against terrorism. It is a passionate debate we have in this Chamber and in this country. I respect the views of everyone who stands and offers their thoughts about what this country ought to do.

We need to get this right. The future of this country, perhaps the future of the world, depends on our ability to get this right. But I have been waking up in the mornings and picking up the morning papers and seeing statements in the papers that have bothered me a lot.

I want to mention, as we bring to the floor of the Senate a piece of legislation authorizing the spending for our military of $640 billion roughly—$640 billion—and we are building anti-ballistic missile defense systems, we are building ICBMs, we are building tanks and planes and ships, we are doing all these things, and we are spending a lot of money—but, even as we do all that, let me review something else, if I might.

It has been 6 years since Osama bin Laden and al-Qaida attacked us with 19 people and box cutters, hijacking airplanes loaded with fuel and killing innocent Americans—thousands of them.

Six years since those attacks. A long time.

It has been 6 long years, and yet Osama bin Laden is still free today. He has not been brought to justice.

It has been 6 long years, and al-Qaida is stronger today than it has been in years, according to all of the reports recently released.

It has been 6 years, and al-Qaida is now rebuilding its terrorist training camps, along with the Taliban, in a safe harbor.

It has been 6 years, and they are reconstituting their ability to attack us. Yes, al-Qaida and the Taliban are reconstituting their operational capability in a safe hideaway in Pakistan. It is called a ''secure hideaway in Pakistan'' officially.

It remains the greatest threat to the United States, even after these 6 long years: after two wars in two countries, after trillions of dollars spent on those wars and for homeland security, after the deaths of thousands of our military, and after the wounding of tens of thousands of our military.

Yesterday, we heard from the No. 2 person, al-Zawahiri. He has released about a dozen tapes in the last year. Previously, we heard from Osama bin Laden. They are free, and they have escaped justice, and they are exhorting their followers to attack and kill, and al-Qaida is reconstituting.

All this after six years.

Let me describe a couple of things.

On, January, 11, 2007, in testimony before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, the top intelligence person in our country said:

> Al Qaeda continues to plot attacks against our Homeland and other targets with the objective of inflicting mass casualties. And they continue to maintain active connections and relationships that radiate outward from their leaders' secure hideaway in Pakistan.

Our top intelligence person in this country said they have a secure hideout in Pakistan. John Negroponte said that. He was the Director of National Intelligence at the time. That was only a few months ago.

Here is what he also said:

> Al Qaeda is the terrorist organization that poses the greatest threat to US interests, including to the Homeland.

January 2007. That is not from the New York Times or the Washington Post, that is the testimony from John Negroponte, who at that point was the top intelligence official in our Government. Al Qaeda had a secure hideaway in Pakistan and remained the greatest threat to the U.S.

Now, 2 days ago, I read in the paper that the head of our Homeland Security agency has a ''gut feeling'' about a new period of increased risk—a ''gut feeling.''

Well, let me show you what we had in August of 2001: a Presidential daily briefing. This was released, by the way, about 3 years ago. This was the Presidential daily briefing, and I have it in my hand, dated August 6, 2001. The title is ''Bin Laden determined to strike in the U.S.''

That was the Presidential daily briefing in August of 2001. ''Bin Laden determined to strike in the U.S.''

July of 2007, almost six years later, top administration officials say that ''Al Qaeda is better positioned to strike the West.'' That's the secret intelligence assessment of the National Counter Terrorism Center.

Think of that for a moment. Six years have passed. Six years have passed since the attacks of September 11, 2001. But, here we are debating a $640-plus billion authorization bill for armaments of every kind, and the greatest threat to our country today, according to the top intelligence Director in this Government, is al-Qaida and its network. And they operate from a secure hideaway in Pakistan. And, they are rebuilding their operational capability. Six years later.

What has happened? What is happening? Well, we wake up in the morning and we read what is happening: Officials are worrying of a terror attack this summer. Michael Chertoff says he has a ''gut feeling'' about that. Other U.S. counterterrorism officials who spoke on condition of anonymity shared Chertoff's concern. This article says:

> Al-Qaida and like minded groups have been able to plot and train more freely in the tribal areas along the Afghan-Pakistani border in recent months.

I have been in that area. I have flown over the Afghanistan and Pakistani area border. I understand what it looks like. I understand you can't see where one country starts and another country begins. I understand how difficult all this must be. But I don't understand how this administration has decided, after 6 long years, that it doesn't matter so much that we haven't captured Osama bin Laden. The President himself said that. He doesn't worry much about Osama bin Laden. That's a direct quote. I can get it for you. That's exactly what he said: Don't worry much about him.

Well, our country ought to worry about him. The leadership of al-Qaida is the leadership of the organization that attacked this country and who, even now, we are told, are planning additional attacks against this country. So how is it in all this time that has elapsed that Osama is still on the loose and that al-Qaida is getting stronger and stronger.

How is it that this is so even after the President said ''If you harbor terrorists, you are the same as terrorists to us; there will be no safe harbor.'' There was a safe harbor in Afghanistan for the terrorists. The Taliban gave them a safe harbor, so we went to war in Afghanistan. We drove out the Taliban and got rid of the safe harbor. That's what we did back in 2001 and 2002.

But, apparently now, there is another safe harbor for Osama bin Laden and al-Qaida. After 6 long years, they have another safe harbor. It's in Pakistan or on the border of Pakistan and Afghanistan. They have terrorists training camps there. They are rebuilding. They are planning. Just like they did before.

We must do something about this. We must not ignore this warning. We must act now.

Senator CONRAD and I have filed an amendment and we will offer it when we get the opportunity. It will do a couple of things. No. 1, it will insist we be given classified briefings on a quarterly basis on the hunt for Osama bin Laden and the leadership of al-Qaida.

It will require that every quarter the Defense Department and the Director of National Intelligence provide Congress with a classified briefing telling us what is being done by the resources of this administration and the resources that are given in this Defense authorization bill to apprehend and bring to justice Osama bin Laden, al-Zawahiri, and others who led the attacks against this country and who even today plan additional attacks against our country.

This is an urgent matter. This isn't just going after those who attacked us yesterday. It's about going after those seeking to attack us today and tomorrow.

Just 2 weeks ago, the McClatchy Newspaper, on June 26, 2007, reported that ''Al-Qaida regroups in a new sanctuary on the Pakistani border,'' senior U.S. military intelligence and law enforcement officials say. It reported that ''While the U.S. presses its war against insurgents linked to al-Qaida in Iraq, Osama bin Laden's group is recruiting, regrouping, and rebuilding in a new sanctuary along the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan.''

Six years after the attacks in this country, this is what we read.

Now, we are in a war in the country of Iraq. I understand there are some in this Chamber who say this is the beachhead against al-Qaida. It is not. Does al-Qaida exist in Iraq? Yes, it does. But most of what is happening in Iraq is sectarian violence: Shia killing Sunni, Sunni killing Shia, Sunni and Shia killing American soldiers. Yes, al-Qaida exists in Iraq, but al-Qaida has largely come to Iraq as a result of what has been happening in Iraq. It was not and is not the central fight with respect to the war on terror.

I spoke about this previously with respect to an amendment of this type. Incidentally, Senator CONRAD and I have gotten this amendment passed by the Senate previously, but it gets dropped in conference. My hope is it will pass the Senate once again and this time—this time, at long last—it will not be dropped in conference.

Finally, on a quarterly basis, at least, we will be able to get classified information about whether this administration is pursuing and bringing to justice those who attacked this country on 9/11, 2001, and those who, according to the papers this morning and yesterday morning and the morning before that, continue to plot those attacks against this country.

How much longer will we be asked to read these stories, in most cases by unnamed administration officials?

> ''Senior leaders of al-Qaida operating from Pakistan over the past year have set up a band of training camps in the tribal regions near the Afghan border,'' according to American intelligence and counterterrorism officials. ''American officials said there was mounting evidence that Osama bin Laden and his deputy, al-Zawahiri, have been steadily building an operations hub in the mountainous Pakistani tribal area north of Waziristan.''

Those are the reports. They have been the same for a year or so now. Every couple of months we read this.

I think it is important to ask the question—as we describe a piece of legislation that will offer $640-plus billion for the Department of Defense—I think it is important for us to ask the question as to whether at least a portion of this is dedicated to bringing to justice those who attacked this country.

If the head of our intelligence service is correct when he says that ''Al-Qaida

is the terrorist organization that poses the greatest threat to U.S. interests, including to the Homeland,'' then why is the central fight not a fight to apprehend and bring to justice the leadership of al-Qaida?

Why are they free today? Why are they in a secure area? Why are they harbored in a secure area where they are plotting attacks against our country and other countries? Why does that exist? It seems to me, at least in part, it must be a matter of will. The central fight, in my judgment, ought to be the fight to bring to justice those who attacked our country.

Now, with respect to Iraq, this country is going to leave Iraq. That is not the question. The question is when and how.

The American people are not going to continue year after year after year asking American soldiers to be in the middle of a civil war in Iraq. It simply will not be the case that the American people will allow that to happen. So we are going to leave Iraq; the question is how and when. We will debate that via several amendments over the coming days.

But my point this morning is to say, while we debate Iraq and debate the circumstances of American troops largely in the middle of a civil war in Iraq, the question remains: Why? Why, after 6 years, does Osama bin Laden remain free? Why does he remain in a secure hideaway and remain apparently at the top, along with al-Zawahiri, in charge of al-Qaida, plotting attacks against free people? Why is that still the case?

Shouldn't we, finally, at last, at long last as a country, insist that our major objective be to bring to justice the leaders of al-Qaida and destroy the al-Qaida network? That is the real fight against terrorism.

There is so much to say about so many subjects on the Defense authorization bill, but when we talk about defending our country's interests, we can go back some years and recall that we were in the middle of a Cold War, where we knew who the enemy was. The enemy was a nation state. In that case, the Cold War was the Soviet Union; the Soviet Union and the United States built large arsenals of nuclear weapons to stand each other off in something called mutually assured destruction.

Times have changed. The Soviet Union doesn't exist anymore. Now, the major threat to our country is not a nation state. It is not an organization that has an ''army'' that wears uniforms. The greatest threat to our country now, according to testimony before the Select Committee on Intelligence of our country's most senior intelligence official, the Director of Intelligence, Mr. Negroponte, is clear:

> Al-Qaida is the terrorist organization that poses the greatest threat to U.S. interests, including to the Homeland.

If that is the case, then where is the strategy in the use of all the resources we provide in this legislation to the administration? Where is the strategy to bring to justice those who attacked this country? Regrettably and unfortunately, I think that strategy has not existed for far too long.

As I indicated, I have filed the amendment I have written and the amendment that I and Senator CONRAD, who joins me in this amendment, will attempt to have considered by the Senate. I assume it will be considered following the consideration of several others of the Iraq amendments that have already been noticed. The amendment we have filed requires classified reports on a quarterly basis. It also will double the reward that has been offered from $25 million to $50 million for apprehending or information leading to the apprehension of Osama bin Laden.

We gave the current administration substantial authority to boost the reward 2 years ago. It did not do that. We believe that, because nothing seems to happen with this administration on this issue, it is important for the Congress to push and to insist.

In this amendment, we ask for four key things. We ask that the classified briefings be given to Congress telling us the likely current location of the al-Qaida leadership. All of the information suggests that senior leaders in this administration know generally where that location is.

We ask for a description of the ongoing efforts to bring the leadership of al-Qaida to justice and a report on the Governments of the countries in which al-Qaida is allowed to exist and allowed to rebuild. We ask for reports on whether they are fully cooperating with us and what they are doing to help us apprehend those who attacked our country.

So that represents my interest in trying to address this issue. Once again, I have spoken to Senator LEVIN previously on this issue. In fact, we have previously passed a similar amendment through the Senate, and I appreciate his cooperation in doing so. I would ask of Senator LEVIN if he would give us some consideration. We filed the amendment, and we will ask to follow it up and have it considered at some appropriate point.

He, of course, manages this bill and has the juggling requirement to meet all the needs for time that people have. I see my colleague, Senator CONRAD, is coming to the floor, and I think I have a few minutes remaining. As he joins us to speak of his interest in this amendment, let me ask Senator LEVIN, if I might, while we are waiting for Senator CONRAD, would we have an opportunity either this week or next week to be able to consider our amendment?

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, that would be our plan and our hope. Perhaps the Senator from North Dakota could remind me, did we clear this amendment or was there a rollcall vote on this?

Mr. DORGAN. The amendment was cleared, I believe. We actually offered it twice, but I believe it was cleared.

Mr. LEVIN. I would hope we could clear it again, and if not, there will be a spot for the Senator to offer the amendment.

Mr. DORGAN. We would like, if necessary, a rollcall vote on the amendment and I thank you for your consideration. As I said, Senator CONRAD will take the remaining time, so at this point I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan is recognized.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, how much time is remaining of the unanimous consent?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There is 1 minute 45 seconds.

Mr. LEVIN. How much time does Senator CONRAD, if I could address him, need? We were delaying introducing the wounded warriors legislation in order to give the Senator an opportunity to speak on the amendment which he plans on offering. Is that the same amendment which——

Mr. CONRAD. Yes.

Mr. LEVIN. I wonder if the Senator could let us know about how long it would be?

Mr. CONRAD. Ten minutes.

Mr. LEVIN. Senator MCCAIN is not here, but I doubt that he would have any objection, so therefore I take the liberty of asking unanimous consent that Senator CONRAD be recognized for 10 minutes and then I be recognized to introduce the wounded warrior legislation. Senator AKAKA is also here, and I am wondering if he has any objection.

Mr. AKAKA. No objection.

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

The Senator from North Dakota is recognized.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, the September 11, 2001 attack by al-Qaida, led by Osama bin Laden, is seared on the soul of the Nation. I know it is a day I will never forget. President Bush vowed then to bring Osama bin Laden and his al-Qaida terrorist allies to justice.

Days after 9/11, President Bush said:

> This act will not stand; we will find those who did it; we will smoke them out of their holes . . . we will bring them to justice.

Every American shared those feelings. Similar to Pearl Harbor, the date of 9/11 became a seminal moment for our Nation, a day we cannot and must not forget. But it has now been nearly 6 years—2,130 days—since the attacks of 9/11—that's more time than America took fighting fascism in World War II.

Osama bin Laden is still at large. In fact, he and al-Qaida are gaining strength, by all accounts. Two weeks ago in Great Britain, we saw a failed attempt to target airports with car bombs. Two years ago, London subway bombings killed 52 and injured 700—bombings which may be linked to al-Qaida.

Today's newspapers report U.S. intelligence analysts have concluded that

al-Qaida has rebuilt to its pre-9/11 strengths. These analysts say al-Qaida is ''considerably operationally stronger than a year ago'' and has ''regrouped to an extent not seen since 2001.'' The reports suggest al-Qaida has created ''the most robust training program since 2001, with an interest in using European operatives'' and is ''showing greater and greater ability to plan attacks in Europe and the United States.''

Private experts agree al-Qaida is now stronger than before. According to the National Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism, the number of al-Qaida operatives worldwide has grown from 20,000 6 years ago to 50,000 today.

What is going on here? What does it say to jihadists around the world that a terrorist mastermind such as bin Laden can kill 3,000 Americans and remain alive and untouched 6 years later? What does it say that he and his allies are gaining strength?

There can be only one conclusion: The President got our priorities wrong. Before finishing with al-Qaida and capturing bin Laden, President Bush lost focus.

We know who attacked us on 9/11. It was Osama bin Laden and al-Qaida, not Saddam Hussein and Iraq. Yet the painful truth is the administration got our priorities wrong. The President pulled troops and intelligence specialists out of Afghanistan and the search for Osama bin Laden and the leaders of al-Qaida and instead attacked Iraq.

USA Today reported:

> In 2002, troops from the 5th Special Forces Group who specialize in the Middle East were pulled out of the hunt for Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan to prepare for their next assignment: Iraq. Their replacements were troops with expertise in Spanish culture.

Are people hearing this? We pulled experts in the Arab language and Middle East culture out of the hunt for Osama bin Laden, an Arabic speaker who led the attack on us, and we put those troops over into the hunt for Saddam Hussein in Iraq and replaced them with experts in Spanish culture. There are not many Spanish speakers in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

> The CIA, meanwhile, was stretched badly in its capacity to collect, translate, and analyze information coming from Afghanistan. When the White House raised a new priority, it took specialists away from the Afghanistan effort to ensure Iraq was covered.

I believe this will go down in history as a profound mistake. We lost focus. The President took us on a path that proved to be a distraction. Instead of following up on Osama bin Laden and al-Qaida, we got diverted and directed our energy and attention to Saddam Hussein and Iraq. I believe the priorities were wrong.

The former head of the CIA's bin Laden unit called the invasion of Iraq ''a godsend to Osama bin Laden.'' So I have to ask why—why did we allow our post-9/11 focus on bin Laden to be distracted? Why didn't we have enough forces on the ground at Tora Bora to get the job done and capture bin Laden and his al-Qaida allies? The answer, I believe, unfortunately is clear: The administration made a strategic error and shifted its focus from Afghanistan to Iraq. I believe, as I have said before, that that was a profound mistake.

I spent the last 2 years of my high school years living in the Arab culture. I attended an American Air Force base high school in Tripoli, Libya. In that culture, it is critically important not to allow someone to go uncaptured and unaccounted for who launched an attack. If you don't finish business with those who attack you, they only grow in the public mind. That is absolutely the wrong message to send.

Last September, the administration once again showed it is not focused on al-Qaida. President Bush's national strategy for combating terrorism includes only one passing reference to Osama bin Laden. Last September, the White House issued an updated strategy for counterterrorism. In a 23-page document, bin Laden's name appears only once.

This man ordered the killing of 3,000 innocent Americans, but in the administration's report on fighting terrorist threats, he is only an afterthought.

It has now been 2,130 days since President Bush said ''We will find those who did it; we will smoke them out of their holes . . . we will bring them to justice.'' Those were absolutely the right sentiments and the right plan. Unfortunately, the President's strategy has failed. He has not found Osama bin Laden. He has not smoked him out of his hole, and he has not been brought to justice. Osama bin Laden and al-Qaida operatives continue to threaten this Nation.

I believe that is unacceptable. We must capture or kill Osama bin Laden. We must bring his entire network of terrorists to justice. I believe deeply that stopping al-Qaida should be our top priority.

Our amendment makes that clear. It is very simple. It says that capturing or killing Osama bin Laden and dismantling al-Qaida should be our top priority.

Our amendment has two parts. First, it doubles the bounty on Osama bin Laden. Whether we capture or kill him, it is past time that he be brought to justice. I urge my colleagues to join us in sending that message.

Second, our amendment requires a clear report to Congress, laying out the administration's strategy for bringing bin Laden and al-Qaida operatives to justice.

I urge my colleagues to make it this Nation's top military priority to bring Osama bin Laden to the justice that he deserves as the world's most notorious terrorist.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan is recognized.

AMENDMENT NO. 2019 TO AMENDMENT NO. 2011

(Purpose: To provide for the care and management of wounded warriors)

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I call up amendment No. 2019, the dignified treatment of wounded warriors amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

> The Senator from Michigan [Mr. LEVIN], for himself, Mr. MCCAIN, Mr. AKAKA, Mr. WARNER, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. GRAHAM, Mr. KENNEDY, Mr. SESSIONS, Mr. ROCKEFELLER, Ms. COLLINS, Mr. BYRD, Mr. CHAMBLISS, Mr. OBAMA, Mrs. DOLE, Mr. LIEBERMAN, Mr. CORNYN, Mr. SANDERS, Mr. THUNE, Mr. REED, Mr. MARTINEZ, Mr. BROWN, Mr. NELSON of Florida, Mr. TESTER, Mr. NELSON of Nebraska, Mr. BAYH, Mrs. CLINTON, Mr. PRYOR, Mr. WEBB, Mrs. MCCASKILL, Mr. DURBIN, Ms. STABENOW, Mr. HARKIN, Mr. BINGAMAN, Ms. MIKULSKI, Mr. BOND, Mr. ISAKSON, Mr. SALAZAR, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, Mr. LOTT, Mr. DODD, Mrs. HUTCHISON, Mr. CARDIN, and Mr. BIDEN, proposes an amendment numbered 2019 to 2011.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

(The amendment is printed in the RECORD of Monday, July 9, 2007, under ''Text of Amendments.'')

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I am offering this with Senators MCCAIN, AKAKA, WARNER, MURRAY, GRAHAM, and about 40 other Senators who are listed on the amendment.

This amendment, in bill form, was introduced on June 13 of this year. It was marked up and unanimously agreed to by the Armed Services Committee on the 14th of June. It was reported to the full Senate on the 18th of June. As of now, as I indicated, we have over 40 cosponsors. The ideas of many Senators and parts of legislation championed by many Senators are incorporated in this amendment.

This is truly a bipartisan amendment. It is an amendment that has had a huge amount of input by many Senators. Although I would prefer the Senate consider this important legislation as a stand-alone provision, a stand-alone bill, because of the shortage of floor time, we now offer it as an amendment to the national defense authorization bill. If it is adopted as an amendment, and assuming that our Defense authorization bill is passed, we would then seek to have it introduced and passed immediately thereafter as stand-alone legislation, so we would have it in two forms—one as an amendment to the bill and the other as a stand-alone bill passed by the Senate, so it could go immediately to the House, without waiting for a conference on the authorization bill between the Senate and the House, which would delay the passage of this very important legislation.

Shortfalls in the care and treatment of our wounded warriors came to our

attention as a result of a series of articles in the Washington Post in February. These articles described deplorable living conditions for some servicemembers in an outpatient status. They described a bungled bureaucratic process for assigning disability ratings that determine whether a servicemember will be medically retired with health and other benefits for himself and his family. They describe a clumsy handoff between the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs as the military member transitions from one department to another. The Nation's shock and dismay, when hearing about these problems, reflected the American people's support, the American people's respect, and the American people's gratitude to the men and women who put on our Nation's uniform. Those men and women deserve the best—not shoddy medical care and bureaucratic snafus.

The Armed Services Committee and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs held a rare joint hearing to identify the problems our wounded soldiers are facing. These committees have continued to work together to address these issues, culminating in the amendment we offer today. The Committee on Veterans' Affairs has also marked up separate legislation that will be offered as an amendment to our amendment. Their legislation will ensure that the Veterans' Administration appropriately addresses the problems our seriously wounded and injured servicemembers face after they transition to VA care.

The amendment we are introducing addresses the issues of inconsistent application of disability standards. It addresses disparate disability ratings, substandard facilities, lack of seamless transition from the Department of Defense to the Veterans' Administration, inadequacy of severance pay, care and treatment for traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress disorder, medical care for caregivers not eligible for TRICARE, and it addresses the need to share medical records between the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Our amendment addresses the issue of inconsistent disability ratings by requiring that the military departments use VA standards for rating disabilities, unless the Department of Defense rating is higher. So it would take the higher of the two ratings under our legislation. Our amendment adopts a more favorable statutory presumption for determining whether a disability is incident to military service. We do that by adopting the more favorable VA presumption.

We require two pilot programs to test the viability of using the VA to assign disability ratings for the Department of Defense. We also establish an independent board to review and, where appropriate, correct unjustifiably low Department of Defense disability ratings awarded since 2001.

Our amendment addresses the lack of a seamless transition from the military to the Veterans' Administration by requiring the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to jointly develop a comprehensive policy on the care and management of injured servicemembers who will transition from the Department of Defense to the VA.

We establish a Department of Defense and a Department of Veterans Affairs interagency program office to develop and implement a joint electronic health record.

The amendment authorizes $50 million for improved diagnosis, treatment, and rehabilitation of military members with traumatic brain injury, TBI, and post-traumatic stress disorder, PTSD. We require the establishment of centers of excellence for both TBI and PTSD to conduct research, train health care professionals, and a number of other things.

We provide guidance throughout the Department of Defense in the prevention, diagnosis, mitigation, treatment, and rehabilitation of TBI and PTSD. And the amendment requires that the Secretary of Defense, in consultation with the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, report to Congress with comprehensive plans to prevent, diagnose, mitigate, and treat TBI and PTSD.

The amendment increases the minimum severance pay to 1 year's basic pay for those separated with disabilities incurred in a combat zone or combat-related activity and 6 months basic pay for all others. This is quadrupling or doubling, depending on the circumstance, of the current arrangement.

Our amendment also eliminates the requirement that severance pay be deducted from disability compensation for disabilities incurred in a combat zone.

Our amendment also addresses the problem that exists because medically retired servicemembers who are eligible for TRICARE as retirees do not have access to some of the cutting-edge treatments that are available to members still on active duty.

The amendment does that by authorizing medically retired servicemembers to receive the Active-Duty medical benefit for 3 years after the member leaves active duty, and this can be extended to 5 years where medically required.

The amendment authorizes military and VA health care providers to provide medical care and counseling to family members who leave their homes and often leave their jobs to help provide care to their wounded warriors.

The dignified treatment of wounded warriors amendment requires the Secretary of Defense to establish standards for the treatment of and housing for military outpatients. These standards will require compliance with Federal and other standards for military medical treatment facilities, speciality medical care facilities, and military housing for outpatients that will be uniform and consistent and high level throughout the Department of Defense.

In summary, the dignified treatment of wounded warriors amendment is a comprehensive approach that lays out a path for the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs to address shortfalls in the care of our wounded warriors in the Department of Defense and through the transition to care in the VA system. With the amendment we will be discussing in a moment, that has been adopted by the Veterans' Affairs Committee under the chairmanship and leadership of Senator AKAKA, this bill will also address shortfalls in the VA system itself after the transition to the Veterans' Administration of our wounded warriors. Those warriors deserve the best care and support that we can muster. The American people rightly insist on no less.

There are a number of organizations which support this legislation. I will read from a release that was issued by one of those organizations. This is the Wounded Warrior Project:

> [This] is a nonprofit organization aimed at assisting those men and women of the United States armed forces who have been severely injured during the war on terrorism in Iraq, Afghanistan, and other hot spots around the world.

A description of this project is:

> Beginning at the bedside of the severely wounded, Wounded Warrior Project provides programs and services designated to ease the burdens of these heroes and their families, aid in the recovery process and smooth the transition back to civilian life.

Just one paragraph from their release is the following:

> With this legislation, the Senate is telling our nation's wounded warriors that they have heard their concerns and are ready to take appropriate actions to ensure that these brave men and women are taken care of in a manner befitting their sacrifices. . . . This wide ranging legislation will improve the provision of health care and benefits to injured military personnel and make the system much more efficient as well.

I ask unanimous consent that the statement of the Wounded Warrior Project and the statement of the Fleet Reserve Association be printed in the RECORD at the conclusion of my remarks.

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

(See exhibit 1.)

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, we have a number of amendments which have been cleared, 10 amendments which have been cleared which we will describe in a few moments after Senator MCCAIN speaks and after Senator AKAKA speaks. We will describe those second-degree amendments that have been cleared on both sides of the aisle.

Again, I especially thank my ranking member, Senator MCCAIN, and all the members of our committee for the extraordinary work they have put in on this legislation. It is, as I mentioned, comprehensive and desperately needed.

I also thank Senator AKAKA, who is chairman of our Veterans' Affairs Committee, for his leadership because that committee has worked very closely

with our committee on this joint project. This is truly not just a joint effort between two committees but just about every Member of this body has had a role and a voice in this legislation. It is one of the best examples, I believe, of not only bipartisan action that I have seen in the Senate, but also a very speedy action and, we believe, very thorough consideration as well.

I yield the floor.

EXHIBIT 1

WOUNDED WARRIOR PROJECT (WWP) APPLAUDS SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE FOR NEW LEGISLATION TO ASSIST SEVERELY WOUNDED SERVICEMEMBERS

Jacksonville, FL, June 14, 2007.—Today, the Wounded Warrior Project (WWP) applauded the Senate Armed Services Committee for the introduction of the ''Dignified Treatment of Wounded Warriors Act'', a comprehensive piece of legislation that will greatly assist severely wounded servicemembers. WWP was particularly pleased to note that the bill included several of the legislative proposals that the organization has proposed and supported.

''With this legislation, the Senate is telling our nation's wounded warriors that they have heard their concerns and are ready to take appropriate actions to ensure that these brave men and women are taken care of in a manner befitting their sacrifices'', said WWP Executive Director, John Melia. ''This wide ranging legislation will improve the provision of health care and benefits to injured military personnel and make the system much more efficient as well''.

The ''Dignified Treatment of Wounded Warriors Act'' is sponsored by Senators Levin (D–MI), McCain (R–AZ), Akaka (D–HI), Warner (R–VA), Clinton (D–NY) and others. Among the provisions included in the legislation, the bill would require the Department of Defense (DOD) to adopt a Pre-Deployment Cognitive Assessment tool to help identify Traumatic Brain Injury or Post Traumatic Stress Disorder in returning servicemembers. Additionally, it would require DOD to work with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) on developing a caregiver training program for family members of brain injured servicemembers, and reform the disability evaluation and ratings system that military personnel must navigate prior to retirement from service. The bill would also create an overlap of DOD and VA benefits to allow wounded warriors to benefit from the strengths of both systems without having to choose access to one over the other.

In addition to these provisions, at this morning's Senate Armed Services Committee hearing, eight amendments suggested by WWP were adopted into the bill.

''These provisions have grown out of our direct interaction with our wounded warriors'', Melia said. ''We strongly encourage the Senate to pass this bill and to work with the House of Representatives to ensure these vital initiatives are included in the final version of the bill that will hopefully reach the President's desk. We stand committed to assisting in any way.''

ABOUT WOUNDED WARRIOR PROJECT

Wounded Warrior Project (WWP) is a nonprofit organization aimed at assisting those men and women of the United States armed forces who have been severely injured during the war on terrorism in Iraq, Afghanistan and other hot spots around the world. Beginning at the bedside of the severely wounded, WWP provides programs and services designated to ease the burdens of these heroes and their families, aid in the recovery process and smooth the transition back to civilian life. For more information, please call (904) 296–7350 or visit *www.woundedwarriorproject.org.*

FLEET RESERVE ASSOCIATION,
Alexandria, VA, July 11, 2007.

Hon. CARL LEVIN,
Chairman, Armed Services Committee,
U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN LEVIN: The Fleet Reserve Association (FRA) strongly supports your pending amendment to the FY 2008 Defense Authorization bill that include the provisions of ''The Dignified Treatment of Wounded Warriors Act'' (S. 1606), to improve the management of medical care, the disability rating system, and quality of life issues for wounded members of the Armed Forces. This amendment is important and will address significant long standing problems associated with the coordination of care between the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs.

FRA appreciates your leadership on this issue and shares your concern about adequate care for wounded service members. The Association stands ready to assist you in its passage in the 110th Congress. The FRA point of contact is John Davis, FRA' s Director of Legislative Programs at john@fra.org.

Sincerely,

JOSEPH L. BARNES,
National Executive Secretary.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I begin by echoing the remarks of the chairman of the committee that we appreciate the partnership with the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, a partnership led by Senator AKAKA and Senator CRAIG. We have worked closely together in trying to come up with one of the most aptly titled pieces of legislation that I have ever been involved in, the Dignified Treatment of Wounded Warriors Act.

It is important to point out that we are making this part of the Defense authorization bill, which we believe has a very good chance of being signed by the President, as the quickest way to get this legislation enacted. There was a great deal of discussion back and forth as to whether it should stand by itself or should be part of the Defense Authorization Act.

I know I speak for all of us, and that is if something happens to this legislation, we would come back with a separate piece of legislation so that we can make sure we act as quickly as possible.

We were all deeply disappointed by the conditions at Walter Reed that were reported in February of this year and the problems that our wounded warriors faced after their inpatient care was complete—living in substandard conditions at building 18, being treated poorly, battling a Cold-War disability evaluation process and, for some, falling through the cracks.

Since February of 2007, there have been many encouraging changes. First and foremost, Secretary Gates insisted on accountability for the leadership failures that led to the tragedy at Walter Reed.

In April of this year, the Army stood up a new warrior transition brigade at Walter Reed to attend to the needs of wounded and ill soldiers in both Active and Reserve components. This model of soldiers caring for soldiers is now spreading throughout the Army.

I think we are on the right track to address the problems at Walter Reed, but there is much more to be done. And I emphasize, we all recognize there is much more to be done. But I do believe this legislation is a very important and valuable contribution to the effort that must be ongoing. We must match the heroism of the wonderful young men and women who have given so much for our country.

Let me tell you who some of my heroes are: SGT Ted Wade was grievously wounded in Iraq in 2004, who together with his young wife Sara has bravely battled for 4 years the maze of health care and benefit evaluations of the Department of Defense, Veterans Affairs, and Social Security; lost medical records, confusing and conflicting medical and physical evaluations, and Sara even lost her job. These brave young people have also lost time. Four years is too much to ask of someone who has given so much for his country.

SFC Jeff Mittman is a brave Army soldier who was wounded 2 years ago by an RPG that tore away a significant portion of his face. Today, Jeff is still on active duty, though he returns to Walter Reed frequently for special surgery. Together with his wife Christy, they have continued to raise their children. Jeff is back at school. As a testament to his heroism, Jeff says of his extraordinary injuries: ''I got hit hard, but I'll walk it off.'' This weekend, he and his family will celebrate the second anniversary of his being alive.

SGT Eric Edmondson, a soldier who suffered severe traumatic brain injury in October 2005 and was thought to be without hope of recovery, today is standing on his own, thanks to the work of his remarkable therapist and his own strong determination to survive.

Petty Officer Mark Robbins is a Navy Seal who lost his eye from a sniper's bullet after saving the lives of his buddies in an RPG attack in Iraq in April of this year. Mark, who walked to the medical evacuation helicopter on his own after being wounded, is recovering today at his home in San Diego. His determination to carry on in the fight in spite of his injury is not the exception among our young men and women, it is a tribute.

I also think it is appropriate from time to time, even though what happened at Walter Reed was a disgrace and a scandal and a source of national shame, and it is important that we continue to emphasize that there are thousands and thousands of people who work in our armed services hospitals and clinics and also in veterans affairs who are present at our hospitals, who take care of our aging veterans from the ''greatest generation,'' Korea, and the Vietnam war. These people labor most of the time without credit, most

of the time without publicity, and do a magnificent job.

The system is broken, not the people—not the people—who serve with dedication and patience and care, and love our veterans in a way which should be an example to all of us, and we should never forget that as we try to fix a broken system.

As I mentioned, these are some of America's heroes, my heroes, who have sustained terrible wounds, whose lives have been saved by the finest medical professionals in the world, and who, with their families, face the challenge of a long recovery and rebuilding their lives.

This legislation, the Dignified Treatment of Wounded Warriors Act, will make a difference in the lives of our wounded warriors and their families. It bridges the gap in health care coverage for the severely wounded and ensures their access to the broadest possible range of health care options.

It authorizes additional care and support for families who are caring for the wounded. It requires the Secretary of Defense and Veterans Affairs to develop and implement new policies to better manage the care and transition of our wounded soldiers. It empowers a special board to review disability ratings of 20 percent or less and to restore to a wounded soldier, if appropriate, a higher disability rating or retired status.

Mr. President, that issue alone, of disability ratings, is one that, frankly, the Senator from Michigan and I cannot understand why it continued; that from one medical evaluation board, a certain level of disability and compensation would be adjudged while on active duty, go directly to the VA, and then another assessment is made with a different level of disability. It is just nonsensical. And I would like to say to all my colleagues, and I know we share a responsibility as well, we blamed the military, we blamed the VA, and we blamed a lot of people, but part of the responsibility lies right here with those of us who are supposed to have been paying better attention than we did. So I wish to make that perfectly clear, that I personally—and the Congress—share in the responsibility for having not fixed this system and some of the problems that have existed for a long time.

This legislation empowers a special board, as I mentioned, to review disability ratings. It authorizes additional funding for traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress disorder, encouraging public and private partnerships to address these signature injuries of the war, and supports efforts to erase the stigma associated with seeking care.

We found out, much to our sorrow, that in this kind of conflict, brain injuries are probably far more prevalent than almost any other conflict in which our Nation has engaged. We also have found out, thank God, that we are able to save a higher percentage of those wounded than we have in any other conflict—again, a testimony to the incredible professionalism of those who labor and work with dedication in our military medical health care system.

The legislation improves benefits related to the administrative separation from the military due to injury, increasing severance pay for servicemembers with disabilities incurred in a combat zone, and eliminating the requirement that severance pay be deducted from VA disability compensation for disabilities incurred in a combat zone—another remarkable situation which should have been fixed long ago. It requires the Secretary of Defense to immediately implement pilot projects to test improvements to the disability evaluation systems, to fundamentally change and improve those antiquated systems. It requires the Secretary of Defense to inspect and improve medical treatment in residential facilities and to study the accelerated construction of new facilities at the National Medical Center at Bethesda. The current facilities of Walter Reed have served the Nation well, but we can, and must, do better.

This legislation is an important step toward restoring trust for America's wounded and our veterans, but it is not our final destination. Our work also must be informed by the Presidential Commission on Care for America's Wounded, cochaired by one of my personal heroes, Senator DOLE, an enduring American hero. This report will be filed in another few weeks, and I am confident we will work to implement the recommendations of that report as quickly as possible.

I am pleased that the Senate Committees on Armed Services and Veterans' Affairs held a joint hearing on the care of the wounded earlier this year. On June 27, the Committee on Veterans' Affairs reported a bill, portions of which will be offered as an amendment to the underlying bill. These add new resources for traumatic brain injury and mental health evaluations provided by the VA and extend the eligibility for care for combat veterans from 2 to 5 years.

I believe additional conversation and legislation are needed to ensure that veterans with service-connected illnesses and disabilities have timely access to quality health care service through the Veterans' Administration. Given the strain on the veterans health system and the limits of our resources, I believe this can best be achieved through partnerships with civilian health care specialists, based on the health care needs of our wounded veterans. I don't think there is anybody in the world who is better qualified and better trained to address direct combat injuries. I do believe there are many areas of health care in America that are better at certain types of illnesses, certain types of mental therapy that is required, and other areas where health care specialists exist. Those health care specialists should be made available to our veterans. I am a fiscal conservative, as everybody knows, but in this area, the care and treatment of wounded warriors and veterans, we cannot retreat, no matter what the cost.

I wish to again thank the distinguished chairman of this committee for his leadership. I again thank Senator AKAKA, Senator CRAIG, and every member of the Veterans' Affairs Committee as well as the Armed Services Committee for our coming together and coming forward with this legislation. I only regret that it was needed.

I repeat the words of President George Washington in 1789, as I have so often during these times:

> The willingness with which our young people are likely to serve in any war, no matter how justified, shall be directly proportional as to how they perceive the veterans of earlier wars were treated and appreciated by their country.

Again, I thank all the members of the committee, and I thank Ted and Sara Wade, Jeff and Christy Mittman, Eric Edmondson, Mark Robbins and his parents, and all of our wounded and their families. The solution to your trials requires cooperation among us all—in Congress, within the executive branch, and among veterans in military service organizations. With this amendment, I believe we are on the right path.

Again, I want to add my appreciation for the veterans service organizations—the VFW, the DAV, the AMVETS, the American Legion, and so many veterans organizations that labored day after day, in obscurity but with courage and with dedication on behalf of our veterans. Without them, we would not have received the valuable guidance and information and knowledge they have provided us as they address these challenges every single day.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Hawaii.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I wonder if the Senator from Hawaii would yield for a unanimous consent request.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Does the Senator yield?

Mr. AKAKA. Certainly.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that following the remarks of the Senator from Hawaii, the Senator from Washington and the Senator from New York be recognized on this side to speak, and if there are Senators on the Republican side who wish to speak, that they be interspersed with those three Senators.

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

The Senator from Hawaii.

AMENDMENT NO. 2019

Mr. AKAKA. Mr. President, I thank the chairman and the ranking member for their leadership in bringing about changes that will make a huge difference in the military and in our country as well. Later today, I intend to offer, along with my good friend and

ranking member of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, Senator CRAIG, an amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008 that would complement the outstanding work already done by the Armed Services Committee with the dignified treatment of wounded warriors amendment.

Our amendment seeks to enhance the care servicemembers receive once they transition to veteran status. It would improve the capability of the Department of Veterans Affairs to care for veterans with traumatic brain injuries. It would also improve access to VA mental health and dental care, address the issue of homelessness among newly discharged servicemembers, and recognize the importance of the National Guard and Reserve in the VA's outreach programs.

This amendment is a direct outcome of the close collaboration between the Veterans' Affairs Committee and the Armed Services Committee following our April 12 joint hearing. I was delighted to work with Chairman LEVIN of the Armed Services Committee, Ranking Member CRAIG of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, and others on this important amendment. I also thank Senators ROCKEFELLER, MURRAY, OBAMA, BROWN, and MIKULSKI for their cosponsorship of the amendment.

Our amendment includes provisions recently approved by the Committee on Veterans' Affairs at our markup on June 27 and represents the VA Committee's work to address the seamless-transition issues in collaboration with the Armed Services Committee's work on S. 1606, the Dignified Treatment of Wounded Warriors Act. Our actions here today, Mr. President, represent true collaboration between the two committees—a model for how the Department of Veterans Affairs and Defense should be working together.

At the heart of our amendment are improvements to TBI care. Ranking Member CRAIG and I worked on these TBI provisions, and they have garnered the support of many organizations, including the American Academy of Neurology, the Brain Injury Association of America, the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities, and the Disabled American Veterans.

The VA was caught flatfooted by the large number of devastating TBIs resulting from the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. Our amendment would require individual rehabilitation plans for veterans with TBI and authorize the use of non-VA facilities for the best TBI care available. It would require the VA to implement and research an education program for severe TBI through coordination with other Federal entities conducting similar research. There is also a pilot program for assisted-living services for veterans with TBI. This is comprehensive TBI legislation.

The amendment also addresses the amount of time a newly discharged servicemember has to take advantage of the unfettered access to VA care for which they are eligible. Under current law, any Active-Duty servicemember who is discharged or separated from active duty following deployment to a theater of combat operations, including members of the Guard and Reserve, is eligible for VA health care for a 2-year period without reference to any other criteria. Our amendment would extend this period to 5 years.

There are two primary reasons for allowing a greater period of eligibility: protection from budget cuts and ensuring access to care for health concerns—such as mental health or readjustment problems—that may not be readily apparent when a servicemember leaves active duty. In recent years, funding for VA health care has too often been delayed by the legislative and appropriations process, leading to delayed or denied care for veterans with lower priorities for VA care. Veterans who have served in a combat theater deserve to have their health care guaranteed for at least the 5 years immediately following their discharge.

With regard specifically to mental health and readjustment issues, 2 years is often insufficient time for symptoms related to PTSD and other mental illnesses to manifest themselves. In many cases, it takes years for these invisible wounds to present themselves, and many servicemembers do not immediately seek care. Experts predict that up to 30 percent of OIF and OEF servicemembers will need some type of readjustment service. Five years would provide a more appropriate window in which to address these risks. With over 1.4 million Americans having served in OIF and OEF and with over 600,000 of those members already eligible for VA health care because they have left active duty or, in the case of Reserve Forces, have been demobilized, extending this eligibility will help smooth their transition to civilian life.

To further address the mental health needs of separating servicemembers, we have included a provision in our amendment that would require the VA to provide a preliminary mental health examination within 30 days of a veteran's request for it.

I thank Senator OBAMA for his work on this provision.

We have learned from past wars that the longer mental health needs go unmet, the more difficult and extended the recovery.

Additionally, as servicemembers separate from active duty and become veterans, the threat of homelessness always exists as they reintegrate into society.

We have all heard the sad and shocking statistic that one out of every three homeless persons on the street at any given time is a veteran.

To further assist transitioning service members, our amendment requires the VA to conduct a demonstration project to identify those who are at risk of becoming homeless upon discharge or release from active duty. The demonstration project would provide referral, counseling, and support services for these individuals.

It has been proven through previous VA efforts that this process can reduce the incidence of homelessness and other problems among veterans.

This amendment also addresses the issue of the VA's outreach to members of the Guard and Reserves.

In the ongoing global operations, the reserve components have been used on an unprecedented scale. When these citizen soldiers redeploy and demobilize it is essential that the VA include them in outreach efforts.

To recognize the importance of the Guard and Reserve, and to acknowledge their contribution to the Nation's efforts, this amendment would redefine the VA's definition of outreach to include specific reference to the Guard and Reserve.

Finally, the amendment also addresses VA dental care for separating servicemembers by extending the window to apply for VA dental benefits following discharge from active duty. This amendment extends from 90 days to 180 days the application period for such benefits.

Recently returned servicemembers face significant readjustment, and dental concerns may not be a top priority. In addition, members of the National Guard and Reserve are often given 90 days of leave following discharge from active duty, and, upon return to their units, the opportunity to apply for dental benefits has passed.

The extension to 180 days would improve access to care and facilitate smoother transition from military to civilian life.

Our amendment touches on many of the issues that are affecting transitioning servicemembers and newest veterans. It truly complements the outstanding work that was done by the Armed Services Committee to take care of wounded warriors. I urge all of my colleagues to support this amendment when it comes before the Senate. Thank you, Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Mr. LEVIN. I know Senator MURRAY is going to be recognized now under our existing unanimous consent agreement. I ask, after she is recognized and after Senator SCHUMER, who is also in the sequence, is recognized, that Senator CARPER of Delaware be recognized following Senator SCHUMER.

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

The Senator from Hawaii.

Mr. AKAKA. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Senator ISAKSON be added as a cosponsor of this amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. MCCASKILL). Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, it is an honor to me to be here today to speak about the amendment that is currently before the Senate, the Dignified Treatment of Wounded Warriors

Act. This is a critically important amendment for the Senate and a critically important action for Congress and for the United States of America in finally making sure that we take care of those who have served this country so honorably, the men and women who are serving us overseas.

Madam President, 4½ years ago, the President asked Congress to go to war in Iraq. I stood on this floor as one of a handful of Senators, 23 of us who, at that time, said no. I said no because I didn't believe we had a clear mission. I didn't believe we should take our eye off the ball of the war on terror and the al-Qaida threat that was confronting our Nation, and I believed we did not have in place a long-term plan for military action in Iraq. I have never regretted that vote.

But when I spoke on the floor opposing the action of the President, I said once our troops were sent to war, no matter how we voted on it, it was our responsibility to make sure we took care of them when they came home. This country has failed to do that.

I had to sit out here on the Senate floor and fight, literally, vote after vote to get this Senate to pay attention to the fact that we had men and women coming home, waiting in long lines to get their VA benefits, who were not able to get an appointment to see a doctor, who were unemployed, who were being sent back to the front time and time again, whose families were falling through the cracks because of the long deployments, and that we had military facilities that were incapable of dealing with the thousands of men and women who were coming home and who were injured.

Today, finally, we are coming to a point where, through the hard work of our VA Committee, Armed Services, and others, we have brought to the Senate a bipartisan amendment that I hope passes overwhelmingly this afternoon, that begins to address the critical needs which our soldiers are facing.

Since this war began 4½ years ago, I have taken the time to stop and talk to our men and women when they have come home. I have seen the tears in their eyes as they wait on medical hold not for days, not for months, but for more than a year, fighting the very service they swore to serve, to get their benefits. They were given ratings that were far too low in order to keep them in the military rather than allowing them to get out and get on with their lives. I have talked to men and women on medical hold, who were trying to get through a complex system of ratings for help, whose advocates themselves, advocates to help them get through the system, were soldiers who had post-traumatic stress syndrome and had difficulty themselves dealing with their own lives, let alone advocating for a servicemember who is trying to get through a complex system.

I have talked personally to men and women who, after not once, not twice, but maybe dozens, if not more than 100 times, being close to explosives, came home and couldn't understand why they couldn't remember their children's names or where they put their car keys or even where they lived because they had traumatic brain injury, but no one had diagnosed it correctly.

I have talked to too many parents and spouses and family members who have told me horrific stories of their very proud servicemember who has come home, left the service, and been left at home medically dealing themselves drugs because they have post-traumatic stress syndrome and no one had taken the time to find them or their family to educate them about the services they need.

When we agree to this legislation, this amendment today, we will finally have taken a very direct step in helping the men and women who have served this country so honorably.

Madam President, 4½ years ago, when the President asked us to go to war in Iraq, he talked about weapons of mass destruction, he talked about al-Qaida, he talked about the mission to fight the war on terror—but what he has never talked about, in my opinion, is taking care of those men and women who have served us honorably. Today, the Senate is going to talk about those men and women who have served us and what we need to do for them.

Several months ago, Bob Woodruff presented an amazing television series to us about traumatic brain injury and its impact on men and women as they make their way through medical hold and finally go out and get into communities and are lost in the system. Traumatic brain injury is not something that can be treated today and you are fine tomorrow. It is a lifelong, debilitating injury. We do not have out in the country today the capability of making sure those men and women are not lost.

We have seen too many times, when men and women who have post-traumatic stress syndrome can't keep a job, and they find themselves at home and, tragically, cases of suicide because of that.

We have to address the costs and the issues that face our men and women, and proudly stand here and make sure we are doing everything we can. This year, with the Democratically controlled majority, we have finally moved forward for the first time to put in place a strong budget to take care of our veterans. We have finally, for the first time when we passed the supplemental war spending, actually added dollars to care for our veterans.

Today the step we are taking has more to do with the policies these men and women fight when they come home. They are in a system in the service that rates them one way, and when they finally get discharged, they go through a veterans system that rates them in an entirely different way. The two systems do not talk to each other. They do not electronically talk to each other. Soldiers lose their medical forms. They are fighting systems. They can't get the benefits they deserve because they are fighting paperwork.

No one should fight for our country overseas and come home and have to fight paperwork. That is what this amendment will do, is make sure, finally, that the VA and the DOD speak in the same language and treat these men and women as a single person and not just a pile of paperwork.

This amendment has teeth. It will require the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs for the very first time to come back to us by January 1 of next year with a series of comprehensive policies that will make sure our rating systems are the same; that their electronic systems that track our men and women speak to each other; that no one gets lost because their advocate is dealing with his or her own health care issues. It will make sure we can go back with pride to the men and women who have served us and say we have made a tremendous effort for them.

We have seen partisan battles through many years on the floor of the Senate. Today we are going to see a time when we come together as Republicans and Democrats to say there is one group of Americans who deserve us to speak with one voice, and that is the men and women who have served us. Regardless of how we feel about this war, regardless of how we want to end it—I want to end it more than anyone—I want to make sure the men and women who served us are taken care of. This amendment makes a dramatic step forward.

I think it is important to know, even if we were able to get enough votes to end this war today, the men and women who have served us will need our help and our support and our dollars for years to come—whether they have lost a limb, whether they have traumatic brain injury, whether they have post-traumatic stress syndrome. They have borne the burden of this war. It is incumbent upon this country to bear the burden of their care. This amendment takes a major step forward, and I hope today we have 100 percent of the Senators on the floor saying yes to the men and women who served us so honorably.

I yield the floor.

Mr. LEVIN. Madam President, before the Senator from New York is recognized under our unanimous consent agreement, I especially thank the Senator from Washington. She has been one extraordinary advocate for this cause of our veterans. She is a symbol of the effort that so many people in this Senate have put into this legislation, but I just want to especially identify her because she, along with Senator AKAKA and other members of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, has joined with us as one. I thank her particularly.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. MCCAIN. I would ask my friend, the chairman, if perhaps we might, after the Senator from Washington is recognized, by unanimous consent, go through the managers' amendments following that and then proceed with the debate, or is the Senator from New York also recognized?

Mr. LEVIN. The sequence is the Senator from New York, then the Senator from Delaware. But how long will this take?

Mr. MCCAIN. For us to go through the package, a maximum of 3 or 4 minutes.

Mr. LEVIN. Are we ready with the list?

Mr. MCCAIN. If that is all right, maybe between the two Senators we can do it.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New York is recognized.

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, first, I wish to thank both my colleague from Michigan, who does such a profoundly great effort on these proposals and these bills, for the thought and the care and the sensibility that goes into it. I also wished to say that my colleague from Washington, I wished to add my voice, she has been a clarion voice, talking about veterans and their needs and their care long before the issue was front and center, long before the Walter Reed scandal emerged, long before we were able to take over the Senate and put the money of this Nation where its voice has been, and that is behind our veterans.

Now, the amendment that was offered that my colleague from Washington talked about, the dignified treatment of wounded warriors, to honor those who serve us with medical care and treatment they need is another opportunity to demonstrate our support for our troops.

I hope my colleagues will all join us in this amendment and do what is right for those who serve. Unfortunately, yesterday, my colleagues on the other side of the aisle blocked another effort to support our troops with appropriate time at home between deployments. Yesterday they blocked Senator WEBB's amendment addressing the serious challenges our military is facing both abroad and home.

I am disappointed that most of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle felt it was more important to simply go along with the wishes of the President than support our troops, the brave men and women who are fighting for us in Afghanistan and Iraq.

We are putting our most valuable military resource at risk by failing to provide our troops with the resources they need to complete their mission. By that, I mean we are not allowing them enough time to recover in between their deployments to Afghanistan and Iraq.

My State is home to one of the Nation's finest military academies, if not the finest in the United States, the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. West Point produces many of our military's finest leaders.

But while West Point continues to produce excellent soldiers, the Army is unable to keep them. Unfortunately, graduates of West Point are leaving the military at five times the rate they did before the Iraq war. Roughly half of the West Point classes of 2000 and 2001 have left the Army. That is an extremely severe indictment of the President's policies in Iraq.

When these patriots, these young men and women who want to serve their country and enroll in this great institution leave so quickly, which has been uncharacteristic, it says something very severe about the wrong direction our Nation's military policy is pursuing.

That is not all. This January, 3,200 members of the valiant 10th Mountain Division, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, stationed in Fort Drum, NY, learned that their tour had been extended by 4 months. They had been fighting in Afghanistan for nearly 12 months and found out, right as they were to come home, they would have to remain in Afghanistan for an additional 4 months.

That is why I supported Senator WEBB's amendment. We have asked so much our of our brave men and women who continue to sacrifice their lives and place themselves in harm's way to defend our Nation. At the current troop rotation rate, we are simply running our troops into the ground.

This hurts us at home, both in declining retention rates and the rise of mental health issues associated with multiple deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan.

As I have said before, I am disappointed that some have felt it was more important to support the President than to support the troops, the brave men and women who are fighting for us in Afghanistan and Iraq.

But despite the refusal of the other side to join us in the Webb amendment, Congress will not stop supporting our troops, as we carry on the fight to transform our failing policy in Iraq to a mission that reflects the current situation on the ground.

When the President vetoed our supplemental spending bill, we vowed that we would continue to ratchet up the pressure as the President becomes more and more isolated in his views. Well, here we are. This week we in Congress continue to work toward a solution in Iraq that changes our mission from policing a civil war to more on what should be our first and foremost goal, counterterrorism. Now the pressure on this administration is rising as the people speak out and demand change and more and more Republicans are joining with us and the Democratic Congress in looking toward a change in mission for our troops.

As more Republicans join us in our fight to transform the mission on the ground, the President has only responded with threats and empty rhetoric. So let me be clear: President Bush has to realize we are not going to give up our goal of changing our mission. We will not back down, we will not be deterred, we will not rest until the mission changes; that mission that costs $10 billion a month, because this administration has continued to pursue its policy in fear, empty words, charges that people are not patriotic, charges that people are not supporting the troops, even though that is exactly what we are trying to do here and have been doing. That is not going to work. This debate is not going away.

Even though the President continues to stall, telling the country to wait until September when his general issues a report that everyone else in our country and around the world already seems to know, that our current policy in Iraq is not working, we will move now to change the course in Iraq.

The President would be wise to work with us to change the mission now, not wait until September when this report is issued. If the report had any degree of honesty or integrity, it will show that the mission is not working.

I speak to soldiers all the time, from NCOs and privates to one- and two-star generals. So many of them, when they talk to you privately, believe the mission is not, cannot, and will not work. It seems almost everyone knows this. There are many in the military, particularly in the higher ranks, who are loyal to the President, as they should be; he is the Commander in Chief, but in the hearts and minds of so many of our soldiers, they know the policy is not working.

Every day that we wait, our troops continue to be caught in the dangerous crosshairs of a civil war; every day that we wait, the American people grow more dissatisfied with our failed strategy; every day we wait, more members of your party realize we must change course and call for it.

So the Senate, led by Chairman LEVIN and our great military expert in this body, the only West Point graduate in this body, Senator JACK REED of Rhode Island, the Senate has an opportunity to send the President even tougher language regarding our policies regarding Iraq.

This amendment does all the right things. It changes the current mission to force protection, training Iraqi security forces, and performing targeted counterterrorism operations. But it also calls for a substantial reduction in our forces in Iraq by next April, and it requires these changes. It is not laudatory, wishful thinking such as some of the other amendments. It is the only amendment that is before us that requires a change of course in Iraq.

That is the right policy for many reasons. First, our troops are caught in the middle of a civil war in Iraq. They patrol the streets of Baghdad, while Sunnis and Shias shoot at one another. Our soldiers are caught in the crossfire. That is not where they belong; a point

that I, along with many of my colleagues, have been making for a long time.

It is clear the Sunnis, the Shias, and the Kurds dislike each other more than they like any central government of Iraq. No number of American troops will change that no matter how hard they try and how valiant they are. The Sunnis, Shias and Kurds also have to work this out for themselves.

Second, we need to focus on Afghanistan, where the planning for 9/11 took place, where al-Qaida is growing in strength. We are not nearly doing enough in Afghanistan to counteract the ever-increasing production of opium there, a problem that threatens the ever fragile Government.

Not only does opium production fuel the heroin trade around the globe, but the heroin funds terrorists who aim to attack the United States and our allies around the world.

Our soldiers have fought long and hard to rid Afghanistan of terrorists and Taliban. However, as the drug trade continues to surge and consume the Nation, their heroic efforts may be undone. The Taliban draws its strength from the drug trade in order to prevent them from reclaiming the country. We need to crack down on the drugs that fuel their regime.

Secretary Chertoff's report said al-Qaida is stronger today than it was before 9/11. That is as severe an indictment of the President's Iraq policy as there could be. The very forces who struck us on 9/11 are growing stronger in Afghanistan, in Pakistan, and around the world, while we are bogged down in Iraq.

Could there be any fact that demands change more than that? We were attacked on 9/11 by al-Qaida. The next day, 2 days, 3 days later, I was there as the President stood on that pile of rubble and took the megaphone from the firefighter and said: We will beat al-Qaida and we will beat the terrorists.

They are now stronger than they were before that day. What is wrong? Characteristically and depressingly, the President said al-Qaida is actually weaker than before 9/11, contradicting the report released by his Secretary of Homeland Security.

The President says al-Qaida is weaker. The Secretary of Homeland Security has issued a report saying they are stronger. This is so typically unfortunate of this administration. This is a rerun of the weapons of mass destruction issue that occurred long ago. Make up your mind on what you want to do, ignore all the facts, and no matter what the people around you say, no matter what the American people say, vote for it.

Unfortunately, we have become bogged down in a civil war in Iraq no one has bargained for, as al-Qaida grows stronger in other parts of the world. Being caught in the crosshairs of a sectarian struggle not only puts our troops in harm's way, it means we are not focusing our resources, our energy, and our soldiers on what is the most important thing, which is defeating al-Qaida and terrorists.

Our mission today was not the original mission, and that is why we must change, why it must change to put the focus back on counterterrorism. Every day we continue to follow the President's Iraq policy is another day al-Qaida can strengthen.

That is not just my assessment. That is the feeling of this Congress, including more and more Members on the other side of the aisle; it is the feeling of a majority of the American people and so many in the intelligence agencies.

Today, the President claimed there are some signs of success in Iraq. But this administration's sign of success is very different than most peoples'. The Government of Iraq has failed to meet few of the legislative benchmarks set out by the administration itself. Violence in Baghdad and across Iraq continues unabated. Thousands of refugees are fleeing Iraq every day. Iran continues to support efforts to destabilize the region. Yet the administration still refuses to admit we need to change our failing policy in Iraq.

President Bush and his few remaining allies continue to cling to the fiction that our present course can somehow turn the situation around. The American people know better. This Congress knows better. That is why we keep pushing and pushing and pushing to change the mission in Iraq to one that reflects the reality on the ground.

I urge all my colleagues to support the Levin-Reed amendment. It is the only amendment that requires a change in direction in Iraq. All of the others have good intentions, but they are hortatory. They are offered with good intentions, but they allow people to say: I want a change in policy, but I am not going to force the President to do so. The American people know better. They know that if you really want to change the course of what we are doing in Iraq and change the course in the war on terror, then you must support Levin-Reed. You can't stand for something that says: Well, please, Mr. President, consider doing this, as the other amendments do, because the President won't. The President has been intransigent despite all of the facts on the ground. It is clear this administration has lost its way in Iraq, and this amendment charts the right course forward and requires them to follow it. Despite the stubbornness of the administration, despite their continuing to ignore what is happening in this world, we need to transform our mission in Iraq, and we must do it now.

I hope, I pray, for the future of our war on terror and for the future of this country, that the Levin-Reed amendment gets the required 60 votes and we move forward as a nation together and set our policy right once and for all.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Mr. LEVIN. Madam President, Senator CARPER had to leave the Chamber for a moment. I ask unanimous consent that Senator DURBIN now be recognized and then Senator CARPER be recognized under the sequence previously ordered. That is always subject to a Republican coming because they would be interspersed among the listed Senators on this side of the aisle.

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

The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I salute the Senator from Michigan. As chairman of the Armed Services Committee, he brings an important bill to the floor. This is a bill which decides how we are going to authorize funds for America's military. We are enjoying the blessings of liberty in this country because of men and women in uniform who are willing to fight and die and keep this land free. This bill each year tries to make certain they have the resources to fight and be effective, to keep America safe. It is a huge responsibility with which this committee and this chairman have been entrusted. I thank the chairman, Senator LEVIN, and his Republican counterpart, Senator MCCAIN, for their fine work.

I wish to echo the words said by Senator SCHUMER about the amendments before us. One of the most important elements of this debate is what is going to happen in Iraq. If we don't make a decision in Congress to change the direction in Iraq, we all know what will occur. President Bush has made it clear. He has said he will leave it to the next President to start removing troops. That means 18 more months of war. It means 18 more months of American casualties. It means 18 more months of expense for American taxpayers. It means a war that will continue with no end in sight. We have it within our power in the Senate through this bill to change that course, to have a new direction in Iraq.

I will support the amendment offered by Senator LEVIN and Senator JACK REED of Rhode Island. They have been two of our best leaders on this issue because they are so committed to it and study it so carefully. They have it right.

The Levin-Reed amendment says that within 120 days, American soldiers will start coming home. It says that by April 1 of next year, our mission will change. We will no longer have a combat force protecting Iraq. We will have specific, defined missions. Our combat forces will come out. We will be there to fight the al-Qaida terrorists, to train Iraqi soldiers, and to protect American assets and the American soldiers who are coming home. That is it. At that point, the Iraqis have to take over. It is their country. It is their future. At some point, they have to stand up and assume the responsibility. The Levin-Reed amendment says explicitly that is what we are going to do.

There are many other amendments that will be considered. Some of my

closest friends are going to offer amendments. Senator KEN SALAZAR and Senator LAMAR ALEXANDER have a bipartisan amendment to bring in the Iraq Study Group approach. There is nothing wrong with the Iraq Study Group. We praised the Iraq Study Group when they made their report last December. Had the President lived by their recommendations, we might be in a different place at this moment in time. But we are not. We are embroiled in this war, and we need to change it.

I have read the Salazar-Alexander amendment in its entirety. I can tell you that if you vote for this amendment, not a single soldier will come home, not one. They leave to the President the authority to make the decision about when to end this war. We know what his view is. This President is out of touch with the reality in Iraq. He is out of touch with the American people. The Salazar-Alexander amendment will not change that. The Levin-Reed amendment will. It will say to the President that the American people, through their elected representatives in the Senate, want to change this policy, and we will do it by law. That is the way to change it, not by sending a message to the President hoping for the best.

I will support the Levin-Reed amendment. I believe the Salazar-Alexander amendment would have been a good thing to do a year ago when the Iraq Study Group issued its report. Today, it doesn't reach the result we want to reach in an effective time.

AMENDMENT NO. 2019

I would like to thank the chairman and ranking member for their work on the Dignified Treatment of Wounded Warriors Act being offered today as an amendment to the Defense authorization bill. I am proud to be a cosponsor of this effort.

I also would like to thank Senators WARNER, MURRAY, GRAHAM, OBAMA, WEBB, HAGEL, CANTWELL, CLINTON, and BAUCUS, who are co-sponsors of my Military and Veterans Traumatic Brain Injury Treatment Act—much of which is included in the amendment before us today.

Traumatic brain injury is the signature injury of the Iraq war. The widespread use of Improvised Explosive Devices, IEDs, has taken a terrible toll. Even those who have walked off the battlefield without visible scars often find they have suffered the internal trauma of a traumatic brain injury.

The provisions from my bill that have been included in this amendment will reduce the number of our wounded soldiers who fall through the cracks and are left to fend for themselves as they struggle to recover from a traumatic brain injury.

We have made tremendous progress in battlefield medical care.

During Vietnam, one in three service members who were injured died. In Iraq and Afghanistan, 1 in 16 who are injured die. But with the changes in warfare and in medical technology, more of our service members are coming home with serious brain injuries from Iraq and Afghanistan than from any other recent conflicts.

For some of these wounded warriors, the greatest battle comes at home when they seek care. Many of these returning troops need long-term treatment and rehabilitation long after their discharge from active duty, as they fight to overcome the severe disabilities that a traumatic brain injury can cause.

For others, there is a different story. Some service members don't even realize they have suffered a traumatic brain injury until long after their discharge, because we don't do a very good job of identifying and treating those who may have suffered a brain injury.

Fortunately, many of those who suffer a brain injury are able to recover fairly quickly. But for some, the experience is life-altering, even life-shattering. We must not fail them in their time of need.

Consider the case of SGT Eric Edmundson. In October 2005, he suffered a severe head concussion when a roadside bomb exploded near him. He was cared for at Walter Reed Hospital, but then was transferred to a VA facility where he and his family felt he was not receiving the kind of treatment that would allow him to continue to make progress in rehabilitation.

He would have been stuck there if the family had not found a creative way to obtain the care he needed by ensuring that Eric could receive treatment and rehabilitation at one of the premiere rehabilitation hospitals in the nation: the Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago. Two weeks ago, I attended a ceremony at the Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago in which Eric walked out of the hospital.

Now consider the case of SGT Garrett Anderson of Champaign, IL. Garrett went to Iraq with the Illinois National Guard. After 4 months there, an IED exploded next to his armored humvee in Baghdad. The blast tore off his right arm below the elbow, shattered his jaw, severed part of his tongue, damaged his hearing, and punctured his body with shrapnel.

He spent 7 months at Walter Reed, where he received excellent care in Ward 57, the famous amputee ward. However, the outpatient care that followed has been filled with paperwork and redtape. It was months before the VA recognized that Garrett had suffered a traumatic brain injury, and he has not received the kind of treatment for brain injury that could make a significant difference in the trajectory of his rehabilitation.

We need to change the way we handle patients with traumatic brain injury, so that they receive the care they need at the time they need it, and the provisions from my Military and Veterans Traumatic Brain Injury Treatment Act that have been included in this amendment will do just that.

These provisions include: requiring the Secretary of Defense, in consultation with the Secretary of the Veterans Administration, to develop a comprehensive program to prevent, diagnose, mitigate, treat, and otherwise respond to traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress disorder; and requiring predeployment cognitive screening as a baseline for evaluating potential brain injuries.

Other principles from my bill have been included in this broader amendment to apply to all service members, and not only those who have suffered from traumatic brain injuries. For example, this amendment would require: a uniform policy and procedures to ease a service member's transition from the DOD to VA; a 3-year period in which a medically retired service member can obtain the same medical benefits as those on active duty; a joint electronic health record for DOD and VA; and outreach to members and their families regarding the benefits to which they are entitled.

Indeed, we must do much more for all of our wounded warriors, and the dignified treatment of wounded warriors amendment is a comprehensive policy governing their care. This bipartisan amendment also would require: medical care and job placement services for family members providing care for severely injured service members; establishment of Centers of Excellence in the prevention, diagnosis, mitigation, treatment, and rehabilitation of traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress disorder; improvements in the disability system for service members; and improved housing facilities for injured patients.

Our Nation's service members deserve swift action on this effort to improve the treatment they will receive if they are wounded or suffer a traumatic brain injury.

I can't imagine the anguish that must be associated with such an injury, but I can imagine the kind of medical system I would like to have in place if it were my son or daughter struggling to recover from such an injury. This legislation reflects that vision.

I thank all of my colleagues who have contributed to this legislation and I urge all Senators to support this measure.

I wish to elaborate on a story as to why I have added provisions in this amendment. This is about American soldiers coming home who are wounded and how they are treated. Those of us—and I think it includes almost everyone in the Senate who has taken the time to go to military hospitals and VA hospitals—know that, sadly, after promising to these men and women that if they will take the oath to defend America, we will stand by them when they come home, we have broken our promise time and again.

This story illustrates why this is needed and why I have added some language which I hope will help. It is the

story of a brave young soldier named Eric Edmundson, 7 years in the Army, 27 years of age, who suffered a traumatic brain injury in Iraq. As a result of that injury, he went through surgery, and during the course of surgery, there was a problem: His brain was deprived of oxygen for a period of time. He was rushed to Walter Reed Hospital, where he went through more surgery and more effort and then finally was discharged from Walter Reed to Richmond, VA, to the VA hospital. Eric went into that hospital in a very bad state. He really hadn't made much of a recovery. His father, his mother, his wife, and his sister were all by his side praying for the best and hoping for the best treatment.

After a period of time, the people at the Richmond VA hospital came to the family and said: We have bad news about Eric. We need for you to pick out a wheelchair because he is going to spend the rest of his life in a wheelchair in a nursing home. His father says not only no, but hell no; I am going to fight for my son; he is not going to spend the rest of his life sitting in this wheelchair. His father quit his job in North Carolina and became a full-time advocate for his son, this fallen soldier. He fought the Government to make sure his son had the best. Let me tell you what happened.

Eventually, he went on the Internet and found the Rehab Institute of Chicago, one of the best. He insisted that his son go to this rehab institute. The Government said they wouldn't pay for it. He said: I am sending him anyway. He had him admitted and finally persuaded the Government to start paying for his treatment.

Ten weeks ago, I walked into the hospital room of Eric Edmundson. Here was this bright, smiling young man sitting in a wheelchair. He followed me with his eyes as I walked into the room, and I stood before him and said: Eric, how are you doing? He can't speak. He just smiled, looked at me, and nothing happened.

Four weeks ago, I went back to that hospital room to visit with the family and this young soldier. His mom and dad said: Eric has a present for you. I thought: What could this be? They walked over and they propped him up by his elbows, and he took four steps. There wasn't a dry eye in that hospital room. We were all crying, including Eric. He was walking.

His dad said to me—and this was right before Memorial Day: A month from now, he is going to walk out of the front door of this hospital. I was there on June 30, the day of his official discharge. Eric Edmundson walked out of the front door of that hospital. He had been given up on by a VA system that didn't have the 35 years of experience the Rehab Institute of Chicago has. He had been given up on by so many others. But America can't give up on these soldiers. We can't relegate a 27-year-old soldier to a lifetime in a nursing home because we are afraid to refer him to the best hospital in America. That is wrong.

This amendment will help. This amendment for our wounded warriors will help them move forward in the system and have greater opportunities. Sad to say, it doesn't go far enough. There has to be a point in this system where the military hospitals of America and the VA hospitals will concede there may be a better hospital for this soldier, this sailor, this marine, this airman, and we cannot deny them that care. We have to give them that care. This bill doesn't include that. I am disappointed.

We asked these brave young men and women to fight our enemies overseas. They shouldn't come home wounded and have to fight their Government. That is what the Edmundson family had to do. We should make certain no other family of any other soldier ever faces that in the future.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SALAZAR). The Senator from Michigan.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, there was an agreement previously that we would alternate back and forth. If that is what Senator ISAKSON is seeking to implement, they have a right to do so. I would note to Senator CARPER that we did agree that if a Republican did wish to speak, they would be recognized in an alternate way.

I ask unanimous consent that the following sequence be accepted for the Democratic Senators, subject to that same understanding that Republican Senators would be interspersed: After Senator CARPER, Senator MCCASKILL, Senator BROWN, and then Senator LINCOLN would be the order on this side.

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

The Senator from Georgia.

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, in relation to that unanimous consent, I ask unanimous consent that following the presentation by Senator CARPER from Delaware, Senator HUTCHISON of Texas be the next one recognized on our side.

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

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, we have had a tenuous debate, and it is going to go a while. I first commend Senator LEVIN on this amendment. I am proud to be a cosponsor of it. Although we have differences on many things, I don't think there is a difference in this Chamber on the provision of services and health care to our wounded warriors as they come home. As a member of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, I have been pleased to work with Senator AKAKA and Senator CRAIG on many of the provisions in this legislation. I thank Senator CARPER for allowing me to take a few minutes.

I appreciate the remarks by the Senator from Illinois about what he has done in this bill. As I listened to many of the discussions about the things we need to fix, I think sometimes we forget to remember all the things we are doing well. I wish to talk about two things.

One, I wish to let the men and women of the U.S. Department of Defense medical services and the Veterans' Administration know how much I appreciate what they are trying to do and what they have been trying to do. Let me illustrate that by telling a very brief story.

I go to Walter Reed periodically anytime there is a wounded Georgia veteran there. I also see other veterans, but I make it a point to make sure that the parents or a spouse of every one of those veterans has my phone number and knows they have an advocate in Washington as long as they are at Walter Reed.

One of my visits to Walter Reed just happened to be on the Monday following the breakout of the story about building 19 or 18, the building that was in bad shape. That was a national story and reflected poorly on Walter Reed and on us.

When I got there, I first went to visit Corporal Pearson, a Georgian, actually from my home county, who had been wounded. I gave him my phone number, and asked for his father's phone number. I left from there to go to see Building 18. I went over there and saw the condition Building 18 was in, and I, too, knew we could do much better.

On the way to my office at Russell, I called from my car on my cell phone to the corporal's father and left a message for him to call me back. He called me that night. I told him how much I appreciated his son's service, and I wanted him to know, while he and his wife were in Georgia and his son was at Walter Reed, they could use me as a family member, if they would, to give them any assistance he might need at the hospital.

He thanked me for that. He said: Senator ISAKSON, just do one thing for me. I have been watching all this on the news about that building, and I am sorry about that, but if anybody asks you, tell them my son has been in Walter Reed for 10 days, and my wife and I were with him every day until yesterday, and I have never seen anybody receive finer care.

I pass that on not to in any way mask those places where we do have difficulties and need improvement—many of them recognized in this particular amendment—but as we talk about things we want to make better, we cannot forget that day in and day out the loyal American service men and women in the U.S. Armed Forces medical corps at Walter Reed and in the VA who are doing a phenomenal, lifesaving job, a better job than has ever been done in the history of warfare. I want to put in that compliment and pat on the back for them.

Secondly, with regard to the wounded warrior amendment, this addresses so many things we have learned from the trauma of the types of wounds that are coming from the type of warfare we are fighting in Iraq. We are saving so many more of our wounded warriors on the battlefield, but because of that we

have many more who need long-time care, long-time attention, and specific attention. This wounded warrior amendment goes a long way toward doing that.

I particularly compliment the authors of the amendment, and all of us on the Veterans Committee, on the new referral system that is put in here for the diagnosis of PTSD, and how that has been greatly improved in the number of people who can actually make that referral back to Veterans Affairs or the Veterans' Administration or back to DOD, if they are still on active duty.

I also want to brag for a second about General Shoomaker at Walter Reed. One of the things we talk about—and Senator DURBIN's remarks addressed this—is the difficulty we have been having with the handoff of health care from leaving DOD to going to the VA. That has been a problem, and we have a record number of people who are being handed off once their service is over, while they still have treatment necessary, from DOD to VA.

General Shoomaker was at Fort Gordon in Georgia prior to coming to Walter Reed, when he was asked to come in and straighten out the difficulties Walter Reed had. While at Fort Gordon, General Schoomaker had been the real catalyst for what is said in the military to be the best seamless transfer of wounded warriors from DOD to the Veterans Administration.

Today, now, for those who are coming home with amputations, who are in need of long-term therapy, long-term treatment, long-term care, who go from active duty, are severed honorably, to go into veterans status, they have created a seamless transfer in that rehab at Augusta, which is recognized as second to none. I know the recommendations in this amendment which will be adopted by this body will go a long way toward improving the systems by which those transfers take place.

I am pleased to rise to thank those in our military and the care they give, and know there are areas where we can do better. I commend Senator LEVIN and the many cosponsors of this particular amendment for all the work and time that has gone into it.

As we have a very tenuous and difficult debate, it is important for the American people to know every Member of this Congress appreciates the care that is given by our military doctors and our military medical personnel and understands we can do better. As we deal with the trauma that comes from the type of conflict we are now in, this wounded warriors amendment will see to it that the care, the referral, the diagnosis, the treatment, and the transfer are better now than they have ever been before.

Mr. President, I yield back the remainder of my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Delaware.

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, I ask to be advised when I have consumed 20 minutes of my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair will so notify the Senator from Delaware.

Mr. CARPER. Thank you, Mr. President.

I come today to address the Chamber and our colleagues on the subject of cost-effective airlift in the 21st century. Before I do that, though, I wish to preface my remarks with this:

Today, we have received an interim report from the administration on whether progress is being made in Iraq—specifically, progress with respect to the 18 benchmarks that were required in legislation we enacted in May of this year. From the news accounts this morning, there are few surprises. The U.S. military, as expected, is doing its job—a tough job. The problem is, the Iraqi Government and too many of its elected leaders are not.

The Iraqi Parliament remains hamstrung by profound, seemingly irreconcilable differences. Despite months of American prodding, the Iraqi lawmakers have yet to agree on any of the major issues before them: how to share oil wealth, how to share power, when to schedule elections, de-Baathification, how to settle the sectarian differences that so badly divide their country.

We also have news this morning that al-Qaida is once again on the move, bringing to the forefront how the President's policies in Iraq have effectively created not fewer terrorists but more and, unfortunately, made our country, I fear, less safe.

According to U.S. intelligence estimates, al-Qaida has rebuilt its operations to levels we have not seen since just before the September 11 attacks. These reports indicate that the al-Qaida network is regrouping along the Afghan-Pakistani border. The CIA says there is evidence of more training, more money, more communications, and increased activity among al-Qaida. The results of such activity, as we know too well, could be deadly.

This new report tells me we have diverted too many of our resources to fighting a war that simply cannot be won by military might alone, and in doing so we have lost ground on the war on terror. Osama bin Laden remains at large 6 years after 9/11, and has seemingly taken peaceful refuge somewhere in Afghanistan or Pakistan. That is unacceptable.

This week and next, we are going to be taking a series of votes on how best to change the course in Iraq and refocus our energy on where it belongs—rooting out al-Qaida and going after their terrorist networks abroad and at home in a way that makes sense and will better guarantee success.

Part of that means, beginning later this year, that we begin to redeploy a portion of our troops from Iraq to put additional pressure on, and encouragement for, the Iraqi Government to do what it must do to help bring peace to their nation. Part of that means refocusing our efforts on how to win the war on terror, smoke out Osama bin Laden, and, in doing so, make our world a safer place.

I hope our President will work with our colleagues and with me to chart a winning course on the war on terror. We cannot get there alone. This is something we must do together.

Having said that, I want to now focus on cost-effective airlift in the 21st century.

The Senate is writing legislation this week intended to equip our Armed Forces to meet our national security threats and keep our country safe. Doing so is one of the foremost responsibilities of this body.

Our Armed Forces are charged with providing our Commander in Chief with flexible options for responding to a wide variety of threats across the globe. In Iraq, our Armed Forces are keeping the lid on a civil war and protecting civilians from terrorists.

In Korea, our Armed Forces are charged with guarding an ally's border and deterring aggression on the part of a large conventional military.

In the Pacific and the Persian Gulf, our Armed Forces protect American interests through the projection of naval power and carrier-based air power.

At home, our National Guard provides our Nation's Governors with critical response capability to cope with natural disaster, such as Hurricane Katrina.

At times, it can seem as though the demands on our military are practically limitless. Unfortunately, the resources available for equipping our military to meet these demands are not. At a time when our Federal budget remains mired in the red, we need to be looking for ways to meet our military requirements in a fiscally responsible manner.

I have come to the floor today to talk about one way we can do that. I have come to the floor, as I have said, to discuss cost-effective airlift in the 21st century.

Although the air men and women of our strategic airlift fleet rarely receive the attention they deserve, the reality is our military could not perform any of their missions I described if it were not for their hard work and dedication. Strategic airlift involves the use of cargo aircraft to move personnel, weaponry, and material over long distances—often to combat theaters on the other side of the globe. During Operation Desert Storm, U.S. aircraft moved over 500,000 troops and more than 540,000 tons of cargo. During the current war in Iraq, airlift sorties have made up the majority of the nearly 30,000 total sorties flown by U.S. military aircraft.

Strategic airlift enables our military to respond to threats wherever they occur in the world real time. Not only must our fighting men and women be transported to the fight, they must be continuously resupplied. Airlift makes that possible.

Most of the supplies, materiel, and weaponry moves abroad aboard ships. Almost all of our personnel and a good deal of cargo, however, are transported by aircraft. That airlift is provided by a combination of U.S. military airlift and commercial aircraft. The three military aircraft doing most of the heavy lifting are the C–5, the C–17, and the C–130. Together, they provide what I call an ''air bridge''—an ''air bridge''—to Iraq, Afghanistan, and to other troubled spots around the world.

Over the past 10 years, the United States has reduced its Cold War infrastructure and closed some two-thirds of its forward bases. Therefore, to maintain the same level of global engagement, U.S. forces must now deploy more frequently and over greater distances. Since 9/11, the scale and pace of operations has increased dramatically.

There have been several efforts in recent years to quantify our military's strategic airlift requirement. The most recent one is the Mobility Capabilities Study, which was commissioned by the Pentagon, and was completed in February of last year. It concluded that the Nation's airlift requirement could be met with a fleet of 112 C–5s and 180 C–17s.

Our current strategic airlift fleet—including aircraft currently flying and aircraft on order—consists of 111 C–5s and 190 C–17s. An update to the Mobility Capabilities Study included in the President's budget this year confirmed that this mix is sufficient to meet our airlift needs.

The problem at the moment is not that we have too few aircraft; the problem is that most of the C–5s in our airlift fleet are not as reliable as they could be. There are two ways in which we could choose to address this problem: One, we could fix the aircraft we have, or, two, we could purchase new aircraft.

Families face a similar choice when they have a problem with their car. Should they fix their car or should they buy a new one? Usually families make this decision based on one of three factors: Can the car they have be fixed? If it can, is it cheaper to fix than buying a new one? If the car can be fixed, and it is cheaper to fix than buying a new one, do they have so much money that they can afford—in spite of the greater cost—to go ahead and buy a new car anyhow?

We should ask ourselves the same question when it comes to paying for military aircraft within the confines of a responsible Federal budget.

Let's look at this first chart about meeting our Nation's airlift needs. We pose on the chart three questions: Can the aircraft we have be fixed? Can they be fixed for less than the cost of purchasing new aircraft? Or, finally, can we afford to buy new aircraft anyhow, even if it is unnecessary and more costly?

The answer to the first question is, yes, the aircraft can be fixed. The answer to the second question—can it be fixed for less than purchasing a new aircraft—is, yes, it can. Can we afford to buy new aircraft anyhow, even though it is unnecessary and may be more costly? The answer to that, I believe, is no.

First, let's consider the question of whether the aircraft we have can be fixed. There are currently programs in place to fix C–5s. The C–5s are being upgraded with new engines, new hydraulics, new avionics, and more than 70 other improvements throughout the aircraft. The contractor responsible for these upgrades has committed to the Air Force that the improvements to these aircraft will result in at least a 75-percent mission capable rate. That is up from 60, 65 percent today.

If that level of reliability can be achieved, our current fleet of C–5s and C–17s is sufficient to meet our airlift needs now and for the foreseeable future. That is the conclusion of both the military's latest analyses of our airlift needs and an independent study done by the Institute for Defense Analyses. To date, 3 C–5s—one a C–5A and two of them C–5Bs—have received the complete upgrades that are eventually planned for the entire C–5 fleet. General Schwartz, who is commander of the U.S. Transportation Command, has said he is encouraged by the performance of these aircraft and believes the target mission-capable rate of at least 75 percent will be met and possibly exceeded. General Schwartz isn't the only one giving the modernized flights high praise.

One of the modernized B models came to the Dover Air Force Base about 2 months ago for their annual inspection. I had the opportunity to see it and talk to the crew. I asked one of the pilots aboard the aircraft who has some 4,000 flight hours on the C–5, ''How does it fly?'' His response: ''Like a rocket.''

While most acknowledge that C–5s can be fixed, there are those who argue that many of them are not worth fixing. I have heard two versions of this argument. The first is that even if most of the fleet can and should be fixed, at least 25 or 30 of the older C–5As are such ''bad actors'' that they should be retired. Unfortunately, those who have made this claim have done little to substantiate their claim. Congress has asked the Air Force to provide a list of these bad actors by tail number. To date, as far as I know, the Air Force has not done so. A recent analysis by the Congressional Research Service suggests a possible reason why. Perhaps these bad actors do not exist.

Let's look at this chart, my second chart here: The C–5 reliability argument. These are the words paraphrased from the Congressional Research Service: An examination of C–5 reliability and maintainability statistics for the past three fiscal years does not identify any obvious subset of the C–5 fleet that stands out as notably 'bad actors.'

The other version of the ''some of the C–5s are not worth saving'' argument draws a line in the sand, not between a set of bad actors and the rest of the fleet but between the older C–5As and the newer C–5Bs. It is a common perception that the C–5As do not perform as well as the C–5Bs, but that perception again is contradicted by the facts. Again, to quote the CRS study, the recent CRS study—I think it was released a couple of months ago:

> C–5A performance and reliability is not uniformly inferior to C–5B performance. Over the past three years, for example, the C–5A fleet has averaged a higher mission departure reliability rate of over 83 percent than the C–5B fleet, which is right around 81 percent.

However, some claim that even if C–5As are not uniformly less reliable, inevitably they will incur structural problems because they are older than the C–5B models. This claim continues to be made even after the Air Force established a Fleet Viability Board in 2003 to evaluate the C–5A fleet and render judgment on the suitability for its continued service. The board 4 years ago reviewed all the relevant data and concluded that the C–5A fleet is structurally sound and viable for at least 25 years and probably longer. To be sure—to be sure—the Air Force actually tore a C–5A apart in late 2005 to inspect it from top to bottom and end to end. The aircraft was given a clean bill of health.

The evidence at hand strongly suggests, at least to me, that we could fix the aircraft we have. Here is the question, though: Can we fix them for less than it would cost to replace them with new aircraft? On this point, it is not even close.

Before I go on to explain why that is the case, let me pause for a moment to say that as a former naval flight officer—I served 5 years active duty, 18 years in the Reserve; I have about 3,500 hours in a P–3 Navy aircraft. Let me say I am a great admirer of the C–17 aircraft. I have supported, and I suspect the Presiding Officer has supported, acquisition of additional C–17 aircraft out of the 190 that have been bought so far. Having said that, it is a highly reliable workhorse. Its mission-capable rate hovers around 85 percent. It can land on large airfields and small airstrips, all of which highly commend the aircraft to us, and that is why we ordered and bought so many of them. In my own State, the Dover Air Force Base has begun receiving a squadron of 13 C–17s. We are delighted. We are excited. We are enthusiastic about their arrival.

Having said that, let me add that the cost of modernizing a C–5 is roughly one-third—let me say that again—the cost of modernizing a C–5 is roughly one-third the cost of purchasing a new C–17. Modernizing a C–5 is roughly one-third of the cost of purchasing a new C–17. Moreover, the C–5 can carry twice as much cargo as the C–17. By modernizing a C–5, we buy twice as much hauling capacity for one-third the cost. Let me say that again. By modernizing a C–5, we can buy twice as much hauling capacity for one-third the cost.

Now, I know some dispute these figures. First, they argue that modernizing a C–5 costs more than one-third of the cost of purchasing a new C–17. They do so by suggesting that the C–5 reengineering program is experiencing dramatic cost growth. Again, the facts say otherwise. According to CRS, claims that the cost of C–5 modernization has risen substantially—and this is what CRS says; this is a quote—''appear to be somewhat at odds with official cost reports from the Department of Defense Comptroller.''

The Defense 2006 Select Acquisition Report for the C–5 reengineering program showed average procurement unit cost growth of under 3 percent. Now, it is never good news when a program cost growth goes over expectation, even by a little. However, 2.9 percent cost growth is not particularly remarkable when compared to other Defense acquisition programs.

Moreover, CRS reports that:

> Projections of future cost growth are driven in large part by the Air Force's decision to slow down the C–5 modernization production and to extend it by two years.

Over the last 5 years, the Air Force has pushed this program further and further out into the future—not 2 years but 5 years. Because stretching out the program leads to insufficient production rates, costs have increased.

The contractor responsible for modernizing C–5s has offered the Air Force a firm fixed-price contract in order to guarantee no more cost overruns. All the Air Force has to do to nail down a definite, affordable price is not stretch out the program any further. The ball is in the Air Force's court. If the Air Force does not choose to keep the program on schedule, thereby securing an affordable, fixed price, one has to wonder—at least I wonder—whether the Air Force is interested in making the most cost-effective choice for taxpayers.

Advocates of retiring C–5s have also disputed the fact that a C–5 can carry twice as much as the C–17. In fact, they have begun to refer to C–5s as ''C–17 equivalents'' for purposes of meeting our airlift needs.

However, the C–5 clearly boasts a greater payload capacity than the C–17, as this chart shows. This is the C–5 and C–17 capabilities comparison. Let's look at it: The C–5 and the C–17. MA tanks, the C–5 carries two, the C–17 carries one; Bradleys, the C–5 carries four, the C–17 carries two; Apache helicopters, the C–5 carries six, the C–17 carries three; multiple launch rocket systems, the C–5 carries four, the C–17 carries two. And Patriot missile launchers, the C–5 carries two and the C–17 carries one.

Despite the fact its cargo capacity in cubic feet for the C–5 is only 60 percent greater than the C–17, the C–5 hauls double the load in several cases and actually makes more efficient use of its cargo space when transporting large weapons systems, I think as we see here. Despite the size advantage of the C–5, advocates of retiring the C–5 still make two arguments to ignore the vehicle's greater hauling capacity.

First, they point out the C–5s currently have reliability problems that negate the C–5s' greater size and capacity. The problem with this argument is we are addressing C–5 reliability problems through the modernization process that our friends in the Air Force continue to delay. The second argument I hear for overlooking the C–5's superior hauling capacity is it doesn't actually matter in practice. Some claim that since both C–5s and C–17s generally fly missions carrying less than the full weight they are capable of carrying, it makes little sense to compare what they are capable of carrying when fully loaded. Well, my office was told the reason C–5s and C–17s generally carry less than the capacity is they ''cube out'' first. That means the limiting factor is more often the number of pallets these aircraft can carry, rather than the weight they carry. However—here is an important point—this point reinforces that C–5s actually carry twice as much as the C–17s, since C–5s have 36 pallet positions and C–17s have only 18.

So can we fix the aircraft we have for less than the cost of replacing them with new aircraft? I believe the answer is yes.

Let's look at this last chart, some of the benefits of the C–5. This is a paraphrase of the CRS report that came out a couple months ago. This is what the paraphrase is. It says: Current cost estimates of modernizing the C–5 are about one-third that of a new C–17, and the C–5 will carry twice the payload of the C–17.

Not my words but those of CRS.

We can fix the aircraft, the C–5As and Bs that we have, and it is clearly less expensive to do that than to buy new aircraft. But can we afford to purchase new aircraft anyhow, even though it is unnecessary and exceedingly costly? In 2006, the Federal Government, our Federal Government, ran a deficit of just under a quarter of a trillion dollars. OMB tells us the deficit for 2007 this year will be around $200 billion. We are rapidly approaching the retirement of the baby boomers, which will put unprecedented strain on Social Security, on Medicare, and on Medicaid. In short, we are spending beyond our means, and we are using the Social Security surplus to mask an even larger operational deficit.

The Defense Science Board tells us that:

> Each year of additional C–17 production beyond 2008 will represent an additional $2.4 billion acquisition and $2 billion to $3 billion life cycle cost commitment.

I would ask: Aren't there better ways we could use some of this money than purchasing aircraft the military has not requested, credible studies suggest to me—and I think to others—that we don't need?

Even if we confine our focus on the Air Force budget, it is clear there are better uses for this money. The strategic airlift fleet—C–5s and C–17s—is the youngest of the Air Force's aircraft fleets—the youngest—not the oldest, the youngest. If we have several billion dollars lying around, I would suggest there are other fleets in the Air Force inventory in more urgent need of new aircraft than the strategic airlift fleet, including tankers, C–130s, to name a few. Yet if you ask the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, he will tell you this is the reason the Air Force is not and will probably not put money in its own budget to retire C–5s and replace them with new aircraft.

When we actually sit down and do the math, it is difficult to argue that C–5s, with wings and fuselages that have another 30 or 40 years of useful life, should be retired and replaced with new C–17s. It is even more difficult to argue that it is cost-effective to do so.

The only reason left to consider for why we would possibly want to retire C–5s and replace them with new C–17s is that the C–17s can perform missions that C–5s cannot.

It is true that C–17s and C–5s have different attributes. The C–17 can land on short, austere runways that the C–5 cannot. But it is important to keep in mind that only a small minority of strategic airlift missions involve taking off from or landing on short, austere runways. On the other hand, the C–5 can carry outsized cargo that the C–17 cannot carry.

In fact, the evidence suggests that if we have a deficit, in terms of matching our capabilities with our needs, it is that we have too few modernized C–5s, not too few C–17s. For instance, during Operation Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom, the Department of Defense has been forced to lease a Russian aircraft called the An-124 to carry outsize and oversize cargo because C–17s cannot carry this cargo, and not enough C–5 aircraft have been available.

An-124s are Russian aircraft that are comparable to the C–5s. Actually, they are a little bigger than C–5s. It is ironic that some are talking about retiring C–5s when the C–5s we have are insufficient to meet our needs and we must rely on an even larger Russian aircraft to help fill the gap.

Mr. President, I have come to the floor on more than one occasion during my time in the Senate to discuss this issue. I want to be honest with you; sometimes we act as though our usual obligation to be careful stewards of the taxpayers' dollars does not apply when it comes to defense spending. I want to remind my colleagues of this: When we spend beyond our needs, there is an opportunity cost. We end up shortchanging our troops in the field, failing to provide them with the body armor and up-armored vehicles they need, or we end up shortchanging our troops when they come home, failing to actually tend to their physical and psychological needs, which is a problem and concern we hope to address by the

amendment that was discussed before me.

Let me finish today by commending the leadership of the Armed Services Committee and its SeaPower Subcommittee, which has jurisdiction over this issue. They have shown a commitment over the years to identifying the facts on this issue and making decisions based on the facts.

The Defense bill reported out of the Armed Services Committee—the bill before us today—retains the requirement in current law that we fully flight-test three C–5s that have been modernized before making any further C–5 retirement decisions. The committee also approved report language requiring the Air Force to provide Congress with a report this year, giving us an up-to-date assessment on the performance of these three C–5s which have undergone modernization upgrades, as well as the projected cost of upgrading of the rest of the C–5 fleet.

I thank the members of the committee and the chairman and Senator MCCAIN, as well as their staffs, for their work on this issue. I hope we pass this Defense authorization bill which is before us. I hope the Senate will insist on its position in this regard in the conference with the House.

I yield back my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan is recognized.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that following Senator MCCASKILL's remarks, Senator COLLINS be recognized on the Republican side.

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

The Senator from Missouri is recognized.

Mrs. MCCASKILL. Mr. President, I thank Chairman LEVIN and Senator MCCAIN for making this amendment a priority. I also thank Chairman AKAKA, Senator MURRAY, and many others who worked on this issue for a long time.

I was honored to have the opportunity to be one of the first in the Senate to file a bill on the subject of wounded warriors after the Walter Reed scandal broke. It was an interesting process for me because I spent time at Walter Reed and, of course, I got the official tour. Then I sat down and talked to the soldiers there. It was in those conversations that I learned about some of the problems we are trying to address in this important amendment. Many of the things Senator OBAMA and I included in our legislation have, in fact, been included in this amendment. Overall, it is going to make a real difference in these warriors' lives and their families' lives—how they are treated within our health care system as they return from battle, as they return from their service, while they are still in the Active military.

I won't go into the details of the amendment. Many others have spoken about it. Suffice it to say that, overall, it is going to make a huge improvement in the physical disability system and being able to maneuver through the system in a way that is not punitive, making that transition from the Active military to the veterans system much smoother and easier to navigate. It is going to support the families of these men and women. That was what struck me. Some of these family members who are going to Walter Reed to care for these men and women who have given so much for us—they were not being treated with consistency, not getting some of the benefits they deserved because, frankly, they were doing us a favor by being there and caring for their loved ones. We also address that.

Certainly, we have more assistance and advocacy for outpatients. That was the meat of the problem at Walter Reed. It wasn't the quality of the medical care they were receiving; it was the way the outpatients were being treated, the facilities they were in, the priority they were being given, and were their needs being met, particularly in the area of substance abuse, and were they being met in the area of mental health care. I think this amendment will go a long way toward correcting the underlying problems in the system that allowed the scandal at Walter Reed to become the focus of the American public for so many weeks early in the year.

I also, with some regret, repeat some words I have said before. The reason I regret having to repeat these words is because when I gave this speech 14 months ago, I believed at the time I gave this speech that there would be change after the election. I believed in my heart that the people in Washington would listen like they had not listened before. But because they have not, I think it is important to repeat part of the speech I gave on Harry Truman's birthday, in May of last year, as I talked about the war in Iraq and the reasons I thought it was important to make a change in the Senate.

I grew up in rural Missouri, in the heart of a Nation that I was raised to love and revere. I grew up surrounded by strong men and women who had won a great world war, a war fought against tyranny. My father was a decorated veteran of that war whom I rarely recall ever hearing speak about combat. As I grew older, his silence spoke volumes to me, not only about the modesty of his generation but about what Dwight Eisenhower later called the ''agony of the battlefield.''

I grew up in a family of Missouri Democrats, Roosevelt people, Truman people, but one of the first political speeches my father asked me to read was President Eisenhower's farewell address that he gave in 1961. Reading his speech again later in my life, I found myself deeply moved by his words. I respect his eloquence as he spoke of this country's fundamental decency and greatness. He called upon America to live up to its ideals by always using our greatest strength wisely in the service of peace and liberty. He warned us to be aware of arrogance, yet maintain our readiness to sacrifice.

I was raised to believe that sacrifice in the defense of our freedom is an American ideal and that from our earliest days, Americans have willingly given of themselves in our defense and in the defense of others. I have always known and felt and believed that, through generation after generation, that willingness has made us safe.

So as I grew up in Missouri, our country seemed on the verge of its greatest period, a time of joy and growth and undeniable strength; a time when all would finally share in our Nation's great bounty, when our military would be used wisely to benefit ourselves and the world; a time, too, when long-closed doors would finally open and we would live up to the ideal of America that lit all the continents with hope and promise and made us admired and respected across so much of the globe. I did not think then that an American leader would ever squander the trust of our people or the admiration of the world that had been won with such courage and at such a cost. But that is what has happened.

In the days after 9/11, this Nation was united, as it was after Pearl Harbor. The world bled for us and stood at our side. Our historic allies offered all possible aid. New allies in Asia and the Middle East emerged, all agreeing to support us in a war on terror.

But that has changed. America was misled into a different war, not against al-Qaida. Instead, we went to war with Iraq. Fearful of weapons of mass destruction, we believed they were a threat to the world. We had a plan to destroy the terrorists. We were strong. But there were no weapons of mass destruction. We did not have a plan to destroy the terrorists. We did not even have a plan to take care of Iraq.

Now our strength has been compromised. The President and his administration have led us into a quagmire, alienated our allies, diminished our national morale, cost us billions of dollars, thousands of precious lives, and maimed many thousands more. Even our Nation's top military authorities have cited enormous mistakes, while this administration refuses to listen to them.

Those were words of a speech I gave 14 months ago, and this administration still refuses to listen. I have listened. I have listened to Missourians. I have listened to General Petraeus. I have listened to the President. I have listened to the experts who have come in front of our Committee on Armed Services, including former generals, generals who have served in Iraq, and maybe most importantly, I have listened to brave soldiers in Iraq.

I sat across a breakfast table and looked at a young man and said: But are you worried if we begin pulling out of Iraq that it will be chaos?

And this young man from Missouri, from a State that I love and he loves, and a country that we want to protect

more than anything, looked at me and said: Ma'am, we are in chaos. We need to get out of here.

I implore the Commander in Chief to listen to America, to listen to the people of this country who figured this out months ago. We are stuck in a situation that is squandering the lives of our bravest, and it is also squandering the future of our Nation because of the financial toll it is taking on our budget.

It is time that we change course in Iraq. We have an opportunity to speak louder than any American voice can speak. We have an opportunity to say to the President of the United States: You must change course. It is time to bring our combat troops home from Iraq.

We need to begin that process quickly, and we need to begin to refocus our efforts on fighting terrorism around the world, going after al-Qaida, making our military strong, restoring our prominence in the world with allies that matter, understanding that the strength of our Nation rests with a strong military that we must protect and not wear thin, and, finally, realize that America is speaking with a strong voice. This is a democracy. If we cannot listen to those who sent us here, we have failed our duty in this great Chamber.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. WEBB). The Senator from Maine.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I rise in strong support of the amendment that is being offered by Senator LEVIN and Senator MCCAIN that will add to this legislation the wounded warriors bill that we worked so hard on in the Armed Services Committee.

I also wish to acknowledge the great leadership of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, Senator LARRY CRAIG and Senator DANIEL AKAKA.

This is an unusual case where two Senate committees worked together in a bipartisan way to produce legislation that will help improve the care of our veterans, our wounded warriors, and their families.

All of us were outraged by the reports of substandard conditions at Walter Reed Hospital. But our investigation of those conditions revealed other problems with the system—disparities in the award of disability ratings, poor treatment of our soldiers and marines after they had left the military hospitals, a lack of a smooth transition into the VA medical system. These are just some of the problems that were uncovered. I believe this legislation contains the reforms that are going to make a real difference in ensuring high quality, consistent medical care for those who have given so much.

I have become particularly concerned about the treatment of those who are suffering from traumatic brain injury. Traumatic brain injury, or TBI, has emerged as the signature injury of the Iraq war. Bomb blasts are the most common cause of injury and death in Iraq. While improvements in body armor and protective gear have enabled our troops to survive attacks that once would have proven deadly, they still do not fully protect against damage from blasts from roadside explosives or suicide bombers.

As many as 28 percent of the 1.4 million troops who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan have been exposed to bomb blasts and may have suffered at least some form of traumatic brain injury. Mr. President, 60 percent of the blast victims treated at Walter Reed have been diagnosed with mild, moderate, or severe traumatic brain injury.

I visited one such soldier recently at Walter Reed, a 19-year-old soldier from Maine who is faced with making an agonizing medical decision while he is suffering the effects of a mild case of TBI. I thought: How terribly difficult it was for this brave young man to be faced with making a decision about whether to amputate his foot while his judgment is impaired by a traumatic brain injury, an injury that was not initially diagnosed. And that is one of the problems.

I have worked very closely with the Senator from New York, Mrs. CLINTON, to come up with a better system for screening soldiers for TBI because while the evidence of brain injury may be dramatically clear in some cases, in others there may be no outward or visible sign of the trauma. It can take days, weeks, or even months before the symptoms of TBI are readily apparent. As a consequence, as with this soldier, a mild case of TBI may go misdiagnosed or untreated, particularly if the servicemember has sustained more obvious injuries.

Soldiers with TBI often have symptoms affecting several areas of brain function. Headaches, sleep disorders, and sensitivity to light and noise are common. Attention, memory, language, and problem-solving abilities can be affected. Some of the more troubling symptoms can be behavioral: mood changes, depression, anxiety, emotional symptoms. Moreover, sometimes the symptoms of TBI overlap with post-traumatic stress disorder, making it difficult to distinguish between the two.

Sadly, failure to accurately diagnose or treat TBI can result in frustration, inadequate medical treatment, and a series—an endless series—of hardships for our returning veterans and their families.

So I am very pleased the wounded warriors bill includes an expansion of research into TBI and, perhaps most important, provisions authored by Senator CLINTON and myself that will address problems resulting from the misdiagnosis, or the failure to diagnose at all, cases of TBI. The bill will improve the screening process that our troops go through before deployment to improve TBI diagnoses after deployment.

While many wounded servicemembers receive cognitive evaluations upon their return, if there is no baseline test conducted prior to the injury, it can be very difficult to assess the injury, and it can lead to questions about the validity of postdeployment assessment. So our amendment requires a baseline assessment to be done prior to the deployment.

I end by saying that the idea for this predeployment assessment came to me from a neurologist in Maine who treated a soldier back from Iraq who had a traumatic brain injury that had been missed. It was severely interfering with his recovery. Fortunately, this neurologist was able to make the correct diagnosis and see that this brave soldier who had sacrificed so much got the care and treatment he needed.

I believe the provisions in the wounded warriors bill, the amendment before us, will greatly reduce the chances of misdiagnosis in the future. There are many other provisions in this bill that are going to improve the treatment and care for those who have served their country so well and sacrificed so much, but I did want to highlight these provisions of special interest to me.

Again, I salute the leaders of the Armed Services Committee and the Veterans' Affairs Committee for their dedication and hard work. All of us have learned so much, and each and every one of us is committed to ensuring the highest quality of care for those who have sacrificed so much.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, in November, voters in my State of Ohio and across this Nation shouted from the ballot box: The Iraq war must end. They demanded we refocus our efforts on securing our homeland so that the darkest day in our Nation's history, 9/11, is never repeated. With Democrats in control of Congress this session, we immediately began to work to end the war. We set out to implement the full recommendations of the 9/11 Commission, recommendations that will go a long way toward making our country safer.

By working to end the war in Iraq and passing the commission's recommendations, we are executing a strategy to combat terrorism. Make no mistake, ending the war in Iraq is a counterterrorism strategy. Global terrorist attacks have increased sevenfold since we invaded Iraq—sevenfold. Unfortunately and tragically, our continued engagement in Iraq is the best thing that ever happened to jihadist recruitment.

Democrats brought to this Chamber not just one piece of legislation to redeploy our troops out of Iraq but many. And each time, every time, either Republicans defeated the measure in Congress by threatening filibuster or the President vetoed it in the White House—each time, every time.

Two days ago, the President was in my State in Cleveland trying to buy more time for this war. The President has yet to define ''victory.'' He has yet to tell us how many years it will take

to achieve whatever his definition of ''victory'' is. Will we be in Iraq for 5 more years, for 10 more years, for 15 more years? Will more thousands of U.S. service men and women die, tens of thousands? The President has yet to hold himself and his administration accountable for fomenting a civil war and breeding more global terrorism.

The President is proud of his stubbornness. He should be ashamed.

The path he is wed to has simultaneously increased the threat of terrorism and reduced our Nation's capacity to protect against it. Stubbornness is not leadership. Defensiveness is not leadership. Finger-pointing is not leadership. Supporting the President's strategy in Iraq because you support the President is not leadership. Lives are at stake. Our homeland security is at stake. Global stability and security are at stake.

Yesterday we learned that al-Qaida is at pre-9/11 strength. That is frightening news, and it is cause for outrage because it did not have to be that way, and it does not have to be that way.

We learned yesterday that the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan is fostering the next generation of al-Qaida at an alarming rate. What kind of signal exactly does the President and his supporters think we send by failing to secure the region where we know al-Qaida lives and trains and plans, according to military analysts, with relative freedom—the same region that served as the breeding ground for global terrorism through al-Qaida before 9/11, the same region we now know that al-Qaida trained in for the deadliest attack on our Nation's soil, the same region where Osama bin Laden, the mastermind behind 9/11, is believed to be hiding, free to plot the next attack on our homeland.

Over the objection of military advisers, the 9/11 Commission, and the voice of a nation, the President stubbornly insists upon staying the course with a failed policy in Iraq. Staying the course with the President's failed Iraq policy hasn't forced our Government to take its eye off the ball, it has caused us to drop it.

Prior to World War II, the French built the Maginot Line, assuming this line would prevent Germany from attacking France. History proved the French wrong. The President's strategy in Iraq is the Maginot Line of the 21st century. It imperils our Nation by mistakenly focusing our attention in the wrong direction.

We have dropped the ball on capturing Osama bin Laden. We have dropped the ball on securing Afghanistan. We have dropped the ball on implementing the 9/11 Commission recommendations. Anyone who thinks those aren't signals al-Qaida is paying close attention to is sorely mistaken.

Supporting the President's policy doesn't just fail to effectively target terrorism, it puts a bull's-eye squarely on our Nation. Ending the war in Iraq isn't just about bringing our troops home. It isn't just about ensuring veterans get the health care and the benefits they have long been denied. It isn't just about a new direction in our foreign policy. It is about returning our focus to where it must be if our Nation, our communities, and our families are to remain safe. Ending the war in Iraq is about reengaging in full force on the war on terror.

I applaud my Republican friends who have chosen to stand up to the President. More and more of them have taken steps of bravery with every vote we bring to the floor. But it is not enough. With every lost vote, we add more lives to the list of the men and women lost in Iraq. With every lost vote, we empower al-Qaida.

In the Senate, those of us committed to ending this war of choice and securing our Nation will keep fighting to end the war. I appreciate the leadership of Senator WEBB, of Senator HAGEL, Senator REID, and Senator LEVIN, all of whom have shown courageous leadership on this crisis of a generation. Together, we are going to change this policy. The safety of every American depends on it.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Idaho.

Mr. LEVIN. Will the Senator from Idaho yield for a unanimous consent request?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that after the Senator from Idaho has completed his remarks, the Senator from Massachusetts, Mr. KERRY, be recognized; after Senator LINCOLN, if there is a Republican here, they would then come next and that, after that, after Senator LINCOLN, Senator KERRY be the next Democrat in sequence.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, and I would not object, for the purposes of planning, I know we have a vote at 4. Does Senator LINCOLN have an estimate as to how much time she will take?

Mrs. LINCOLN. Ten minutes.

Mr. KERRY. Reserving the right to object, I would not object, but it is my understanding we are trying to go back and forth. Is there a Republican who is lined up at this point? If not, I think the Senator from Arkansas is going to speak for about 10 minutes and if I could proceed after her.

Mr. MCCAIN. Yes. Senator CRAIG is here. I know of no additional speakers. I think it is legitimate, since the Senator from Massachusetts is on the floor. I would agree that following Senator CRAIG, Senator LINCOLN and then Senator KERRY proceed.

Mr. KERRY. I thank the Senator.

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

The Senator from Idaho.

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, let me first of all thank the chairman and the ranking member for bringing this legislation to the floor and for including in it the wounded warrior amendment. Let me also thank the senior Senator from Arizona for his leadership on what has been a critical and important issue for our country and, at best and at worst, very divisive. I have not seen him step back one moment from the defense of our men and women in uniform and the mission they are conducting in Iraq, and I thank Senator MCCAIN for that kind of leadership. It is tremendously important for our country that we have that quality of leadership, knowledge, and understanding; to be able not only to travel there and understand but to come back to this country and articulate it.

I must also say I was disappointed when the Senator from Missouri talked about lives squandered in Iraq. I am sorry, but every young Idahoan who has died in Iraq was not a life squandered. To me, that young man or woman was a hero in defense of their Nation, in defense of a nation trying to be free, and an expression from our Nation of that; for preserving for this generation of Americans a sense of freedom and independence in a very difficult world. Lives squandered? I am sorry, I choose other words. The difference between a life squandered and that of an American hero is a distinct difference.

Today, we are here to talk about wounded warriors. We are also here to talk about something my chairman of the VA Committee, DANNY AKAKA, and I have brought forward in an amendment that will be considered and, we hope, handled by the chairman and the ranking member and our whole Senate in a unanimous way to deal with traumatic brain injury improvements and transitional benefits that I and Senator AKAKA and all our colleagues have worked on for those who are in the active service and about to become veterans.

Certainly, the Presiding Officer, now serving on the Veterans' Affairs Committee, has openly participated with us in making sure the word ''seamless transition'' is not just something in our vocabulary, but it is a reality of moving men and women from active service into a veteran status; and for those who were injured and are eligible for benefits, to make sure that transition is, in fact, seamless.

I would like to speak for a moment on an amendment we are offering that deals with that. Senator AKAKA a few days ago laid out a number of provisions that are in this amendment and was on the floor earlier to speak to it, and I wish to address some of those on the floor at this moment but not to travel that path again.

First, I am proud of the comprehensive nature of the language dealing with those suffering from traumatic brain injury in this amendment. Enactment of these provisions will ensure that injured servicemembers, veterans, and their families will receive a detailed plan from a VA treatment team

outlining their care and a rehabilitation program. They can be certain the plan will be reviewed and updated often, even at their request.

They will benefit from new investments in research into mild, moderate, and serious traumatic brain injury. Most important to me, they will have the comfort of knowing the Secretary can provide TBI care in a private, non-VA facility anytime the Secretary determines that doing so would be optimal to the recovery and rehabilitation of a patient.

Through time and hearings, we have discovered in the VA Committee that while the Veterans' Administration and their health care delivery systems are, by the nature of what they do, the best in the country, with some of the cutting-edge technology that is available in the private sector, we are not yet up to speed in the VA public sector. So giving the Secretary this flexibility and option says to our veteran, who may well be suffering from TBI: You are going to get the best that is available, private or public, at the time you need it. That is the way it ought to be.

In other words, whenever it is in the best interest of the patient's recovery, then the VA can purchase private care until that care may be available within the system itself.

These are a few of the very important provisions in this amendment that I believe will make the care and treatment of our wounded servicemembers and veterans even better.

I would also like to point out our actions with this amendment reflect a pledge we made a few months ago when the Veterans' Committee and the Armed Services Committee held a joint hearing to receive testimony on needed changes to the transition programs of health care benefits. At that time, many of us stated our intention to make a good-faith effort to work on these issues under our respective committees' jurisdictions and to merge them back together again at the earliest possible opportunity. Senator AKAKA and Senator LEVIN certainly were good to their word as we worked to bring those together, and that is exactly what is reflected in these amendments that are currently before the Senate and will be when we bring the other amendment forward. So I am very proud to tell the Senate that both committees have done their work and lived up to their bargain.

I wish to compliment the Senators from Michigan and Arizona, as I did earlier, for the work they have done on the Armed Services Committee in producing the wounded warrior bill that is now pending to this authorization bill as amendment No. 2019. That bill, coupled with the amendment Senator AKAKA and I are now offering, will provide a comprehensive approach to improving the benefits and services of those who are severely injured in service and those who need transitional assistance.

Finally, I also think this amendment is very important because it demonstrates Congress can break down the walls of jurisdiction and territory and do the right thing at the right time for the right people. In this case, it is America's brave young men and women who are standing in harm's way, and as a result of their bravery and their heroism may sustain some level of injury.

I and other Senators have been very critical of the bureaucratic roadblocks we oftentimes see in DOD or the VA. But I must tell you we see a merging now and a breaking down of those barriers and roadblocks that ought to be done when we find those difficulties arising. So I believe that if we are going to demand these two agencies break down their walls of territory and jurisdiction, then we can demonstrate the same. These amendments recognize and demonstrate that. I am proud we are doing so today.

I wish to thank, again, Chairman LEVIN and Ranking Member MCCAIN for their support throughout the process, and I wish to thank Chairman AKAKA for his leadership. I also wish to compliment the staff of the Senate Armed Services Committee—Gary Leeling, Dick Walsh, and Diana Tabler—for working in a collegial way with our staffs on the Veterans' Affairs Committee to make all of this effort very possible in the way that it is being presented on the floor.

Mr. President, to my colleagues, the chairman and the ranking member, I appreciate the opportunity to come speak on these critical issues, and once again the cooperation between the VA Committee and their staffs, and the Armed Services Committee and their staffs, I think, is a model of how we get things done in the appropriate way and in the timely way necessary.

I yield the floor.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, first, let me thank Senator CRAIG for all the work he and his committee put in on this bill. I know he and Senator AKAKA and members of that committee have played a major role. Their amendment reflects additional work, and we are very grateful. I know every veteran in this country and their families are grateful.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Senator MCCAIN and I, at this time, be allowed to offer six second-degree amendments which have been cleared—they shouldn't take more than a few minutes—prior to Senator LINCOLN being recognized.

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

AMENDMENT NO. 2131 TO AMENDMENT NO. 2019

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, on behalf of myself and Senators DURBIN and MCCAIN, I call up amendment No. 2131, a second-degree amendment to our amendment. It requires the Secretary of Defense to develop a comprehensive plan for the provision to members of the Armed Forces with traumatic brain injury or post-traumatic stress disorder. The amendment has been cleared, I believe.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Michigan [Mr. LEVIN], for Mr. DURBIN, proposes an amendment numbered 2131 to amendment No. 2019.

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To require the Secretary of Defense to develop a comprehensive plan for the provision to members of the Armed Forces with traumatic brain injury or post-Traumatic stress disorder the services that best meet their individual needs)

At the end of section 1631(b), add the following:

(16) A program under which each member of the Armed Forces who incurs a traumatic brain injury or post-traumatic stress disorder during service in the Armed Forces—

(A) is enrolled in the program; and

(B) receives, under the program, treatment and rehabilitation meeting a standard of care such that each individual who is a member of the Armed Forces who qualifies for care under the program shall—

(i) be provided the highest quality of care possible based on the medical judgment of qualified medical professionals in facilities that most appropriately meet the specific needs of the individual; and

(ii) be rehabilitated to the fullest extent possible using the most up-to-date medical technology, medical rehabilitation practices, and medical expertise available.

(17) A requirement that if a member of the Armed Forces participating in a program established in accordance with paragraph (16) believes that care provided to such participant does not meet the standard of care specified in subparagraph (B) of such paragraph, the Secretary of Defense shall, upon request of the participant, provide to such participant a referral to another Department of Defense or Department of Veterans Affairs provider of medical or rehabilitative care for a second opinion regarding the care that would meet the standard of care specified in such subparagraph.

(18) The provision of information by the Secretary of Defense to members of the Armed Forces with traumatic brain injury or post-traumatic stress disorder and their families about their rights with respect to the following:

(A) The receipt of medical and mental health care from the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs.

(B) The options available to such members for treatment of traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress disorder.

(C) The options available to such members for rehabilitation.

(D) The options available to such members for a referral to a public or private provider of medical or rehabilitative care.

(E) The right to administrative review of any decision with respect to the provision of care by the Department of Defense for such members.

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, the amendment has been cleared.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to amendment No. 2131.

The amendment (No. 2131) was agreed to.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I move to reconsider the vote.

Mr. MCCAIN. I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 2154, AS MODIFIED, TO AMENDMENT NO. 2011

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, on behalf of Senator GRAHAM, I call up amendment No. 2154, an amendment which improves the distribution of benefits under Traumatic Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Michigan [Mr. LEVIN], for Mr. GRAHAM, proposes an amendment numbered 2154, as modified, to amendment No. 2011.

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the reading be dispensed with.

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

The amendment, as modified, is as follows:

At the end of subtitle E of title X, add the following:

SEC. 1070. TRAUMATIC SERVICEMEMBERS' GROUP LIFE INSURANCE.

(a) DESIGNATION OF FIDUCIARY FOR MEMBERS WITH LOST MENTAL CAPACITY OR EXTENDED LOSS OF CONSCIOUSNESS.—The Secretary of Defense shall, in consultation with the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, develop a form for the designation of a recipient for the funds distributed under section 1980A of title 38, United States Code, as the fiduciary of a member of the Armed Forces in cases where the member is medically incapacitated (as determined by the Secretary of Defense in consultation with the Secretary of Veterans Affairs) or experiencing an extended loss of consciousness.

(b) ELEMENTS.—The form under subsection (a) shall require that a member may elect that—

(1) an individual designated by the member be the recipient as the fiduciary of the member; or

(2) a court of proper jurisdiction determine the recipient as the fiduciary of the member for purposes of this subsection.

(c) COMPLETION AND UPDATE.—The form under subsection (a) shall be completed by an individual at the time of entry into the Armed Forces and updated periodically thereafter.

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, the amendment, as modified, has been cleared.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to amendment No. 2154, as modified.

The amendment (No. 2154), as modified, was agreed to.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I move to reconsider the vote.

Mr. MCCAIN. I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 2115 TO AMENDMENT NO. 2019

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, on behalf of myself, Senators CRAIG, AKAKA, and MCCAIN, I call up amendment No. 2115. It is a second-degree amendment to the wounded warrior amendment that requires the Secretary of Defense to ensure that the Center of Excellence in Prevention, Diagnosis, Mitigation, Treatment, and Rehabilitation of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder collaborates to the maximum extent possible with the National Center for PTSD and the Department of Veterans Affairs and other appropriate entities.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Michigan [Mr. LEVIN], for Mr. CRAIG, for himself and Mr. AKAKA, proposes an amendment numbered 2115 to amendment No. 2019.

Mr. MCCAIN. I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To require the Secretary of Defense to ensure that the Center of Excellence in Prevention, Diagnosis, Mitigation, Treatment, and Rehabilitation of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder collaborates to the maximum extent practicable with the National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder of the Department of Veterans Affairs, institutions of higher education, and other appropriate public and private entities)

On page 47, strike lines 15 through 18 and insert the following:

''(b) PARTNERSHIPS.—The Secretary shall ensure that the Center collaborates to the maximum extent practicable with the National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the amendment.

The amendment (No. 2115) was agreed to.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I move to reconsider the vote.

Mr. MCCAIN. I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 2114 TO AMENDMENT NO. 2019

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, on behalf of myself and Senators CRAIG, AKAKA, and MCCAIN, I call up amendment No. 2114, which is a second-degree amendment to the pending amendment that requires the Secretary of Defense to ensure that the Center of Excellence in Prevention, Diagnosis, Mitigation, Treatment, and Rehabilitation of Traumatic Brain Injury collaborates to the maximum extent possible with the Department of Veterans Affairs and other appropriate entities.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Michigan [Mr. LEVIN], for Mr. CRAIG, for himself and Mr. AKAKA, proposes an amendment numbered 2114 to amendment No. 2019.

Mr. MCCAIN. I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To require the Secretary of Defense to ensure that the Center of Excellence in Prevention, Diagnosis, Mitigation, Treatment, and Rehabilitation of Traumatic Brain Injury collaborates to the maximum extent practicable with the Department of Veterans Affairs, institutions of higher education, and other appropriate public and private entities)

On page 43, strike lines 8 through 11 and insert the following:

''(b) PARTNERSHIPS.—The Secretary shall ensure that the Center collaborates to the maximum extent practicable with the Department of Veterans Affairs, institu-

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the amendment.

The amendment (No. 2114) was agreed to.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I move to reconsider the vote.

Mr. MCCAIN. I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 2089 TO AMENDMENT NO. 2019

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, on behalf of Senator LIEBERMAN, myself, and Senator MCCAIN, I call up amendment No. 2089, a second-degree amendment to our pending amendment. This relates to the Center of Excellence for PTSD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Michigan [Mr. LEVIN], for Mr. LIEBERMAN, for himself, Mr. LEVIN, and Mr. MCCAIN, proposes an amendment numbered 2089 to amendment No. 2019.

Mr. MCCAIN. I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To require the development of a program on comprehensive pain management in the Center of Excellence in the Prevention, Diagnosis, Mitigation, Treatment, and Rehabilitation of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder)

On page 50, strike lines 11 and 12 and insert the following:

''(13) To develop a program on comprehensive pain management, including management of acute and chronic pain, to utilize current and develop new treatments for pain, and to identify and disseminate best practices on pain management.

''(14) Such other responsibilities as the Secretary shall specify.''.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the amendment.

The amendment (No. 2089) was agreed to.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I move to reconsider the vote.

Mr. MCCAIN. I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 2090 TO AMENDMENT NO. 2019

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, on behalf of Senators LIEBERMAN, MCCAIN, and myself, I call up amendment No. 2090, a second-degree amendment to our pending amendment regarding the Center of Excellence for Traumatic Brain Injury.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Michigan [Mr. LEVIN], for Mr. LIEBERMAN, for himself, Mr. LEVIN, and Mr. MCCAIN, proposes an amendment numbered 2090 to amendment No. 2019.

Mr. MCCAIN. I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To require the development of a program on comprehensive pain management in the Center of Excellence in the Prevention, Diagnosis, Mitigation, Treatment, and Rehabilitation of Traumatic Brain Injury)

On page 46, strike lines 17 and 18 and insert the following:

''(14) To develop a program on comprehensive pain management, including management of acute and chronic pain, to utilize current and develop new treatments for pain, and to identify and disseminate best practices on pain management.

''(15) Such other responsibilities as the Secretary shall specify.''.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the amendment.

The amendment (No. 2090) was agreed to.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I move to reconsider the vote.

Mr. MCCAIN. I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 2162 TO AMENDMENT NO. 2019

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, on behalf of Senator SNOWE and myself, I call up amendment No. 2162, a second-degree to the pending amendment. It requires the Secretary of Defense to submit a report on reductions in disability ratings.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Michigan [Mr. LEVIN], for Ms. SNOWE, for herself and Mr. LEVIN, proposes an amendment numbered 2162 to amendment No. 2019.

Mr. MCCAIN. I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To prohibit upon appeal a reduction in disability rating once such rating has been assigned by an informal physical evaluation board of the Department of Defense)

On page 23, between lines 6 and 7, insert the following:

(3) Report on reduction in disability ratings by the Department of Defense.

The Secretary of Defense shall submit a report to the Committees on Armed Services of the Senate and House of Representatives on the numbers of instances in which a disability rating assigned to a member of the Armed Forces by an informal physical evaluation board of the Department of Defense was reduced upon appeal, and the reasons for such reduction. Such report shall cover the period beginning October 7, 2001 and ending September 30, 2006, and shall be submitted to the appropriate Committees of Congress by February 1, 2008.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the amendment.

The amendment (No. 2162) was agreed to.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I move to reconsider the vote.

Mr. MCCAIN. I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

Mr. LEVIN. I believe we have done amendment No. 2154. I thank the Chair and thank our good friends from Arkansas and Massachusetts for their understanding and, of course, my good friend from Arizona.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. KLOBUCHAR). The Senator from Arkansas.

Mrs. LINCOLN. Madam President, I have a special thanks to the chairman and ranking member for their leadership on such a critical issue at such a critical time in our Nation. Their leadership and their ability to work together have certainly brought us together here on this issue and many others. I am grateful to them for that.

I rise today on behalf of the brave men and women of our National Guard and Reserve who have sacrificed so greatly for our freedom. They are the policemen and the doctors, the schoolteachers and mayors in communities all across our great land. They are also the beloved sons and daughters, fathers and mothers and families in our neighborhoods, in mine and yours, all across this Nation. Our Nation has turned to them in unprecedented numbers to help defend our freedoms around the world. With pride and courage, they have answered their Nation's call. We have seen also in their call to duty the great contribution they give in our communities because, as they are deployed, we see in our communities where perhaps our mayors or our school principals or our fire chiefs have to be replaced temporarily as they are gone.

Since the tragic events of September 11, 2001, nearly 600,000 of these citizen soldiers, including several thousand from my home State of Arkansas, have been activated to serve in Iraq and Afghanistan. More than 132,000 have pulled multiple tours of duty. In doing so, they have served and continue to serve with distinction in some of the worst conditions imaginable. It is time, now, for us as a nation and as a body here in the Senate to begin providing them with benefits that are more commensurate with their increased sacrifice.

One area in particular is the educational benefits provided under the Montgomery GI bill. These benefits were signed into law in 1984, a time when members of the Selected Reserve were seldom mobilized. Consequently, standard Montgomery GI benefits reflected that reality. But, unfortunately, it is not the same reality we see today. That is why I have offered two amendments to the 2008 Defense Authorization Act. These two amendments are a part of a bill that I have helped work with my colleague from Arkansas, Congressman SNYDER, to put together in the Total Force GI bill that we have introduced on behalf of our Guard and Reserve. These two proposals offer two very big steps toward modernizing the Montgomery GI benefit to better reflect the increased commitment our Guard and Reserve are making to protect our Nation.

I am extremely proud to be joined by 13 of my colleagues, including the Presiding Officer, from both sides of the aisle and over 40 military veterans and higher education groups, working together as the partnership for veterans education. So many of us all well know how critically valuable education is to each and every one of us, to our families, to the success of our economics and our country, and we want to see a part of that a possibility for our veterans.

The first amendment, which is amendment No. 2072, would place both Selected Reserve Montgomery GI programs under the same umbrella in law as the Active-Duty program. Under the current structure, Active-Duty benefits have continued to increase in recent years, while the benefits for our hardworking reservists have remained untouched. As a result, the value of the Montgomery GI benefits has plummeted for members of the Selected Reserve, despite their increased service, from 47 percent of Active-Duty benefits in 1985 to now only 29 percent of those benefits today. This amendment would establish one program with one set of rules that would cut inconsistent and inequitable structuring of benefits by ensuring that all future benefits are upgraded equitably and are easier to administer.

An identical provision has been included in the House-passed version of the Defense authorization bill. My hope is that my colleagues will join me in including this amendment in our Defense authorization bill to truly reflect not only our gratitude but certainly, without a doubt, what our guardsmen and reservists deserve after the incredible and courageous commitment they have made to this country.

The second amendment is amendment No. 2074, and it is identical to an amendment that was passed unanimously by the Senate last year. This amendment would allow operational reservists to have portability of their Reserve Education Assistance Program—it is called their REAP benefit—for up to 10 years upon their separation from service.

In establishing REAP, which is their Reserve Education Assistance Program, Congress took steps to enhance educational benefits for activated members of the Selected Reserve, but we failed to address their lack of readjustment or transition components. As a result, Active-Duty servicemembers have up to 10 years after their separation of service to utilize their Montgomery GI benefit, while operational reservists, whom they are often fighting alongside, without a doubt, must forfeit all of the educational benefits they have earned once they separate from the Selected Reserve.

That is incredible. We have guardsmen and reservists who are serving alongside Active-Duty military. They are seeing the same dangers, the same

challenges, the same pain, the same separation from family, for relatively the same amount of time. Yet when they come home and they leave the Guard, they no longer have access to those educational opportunities. How unfair. How important it is right now for us, as these returning veterans have an opportunity to begin to transition themselves back into their communities, back into their existing jobs or new jobs—the need for education is paramount, and making sure we make it available for them is absolutely essential.

To this day, the Montgomery GI benefits continue to be the only benefits that those who have served Selected Reserve activated duty in the war on terror may not access when they eventually separate or retire. In addition, members of today's Selected Reserve are so busy training and deploying that they have little time to actually use their educational benefits; therefore, their ability to use their benefits while serving is curtailed because of repeated deployment and denied entirely once they finish their service. We are talking about education. We are talking about empowerment. We are talking about something they deserve, they have earned, and we should be making sure we make available to them.

I would like to give an example. Take, for instance, Jamaal Lampkin, who is a 28-year-old native of Malvern, AR, whose story was recently reported in USA Today. Jamaal spent 13 months with the U.S. Army Reserve in Iraq. After his distinguished tour of duty, which included a Purple Heart, he did not have time to utilize the enhanced educational benefits he had earned prior to the conclusion of his service obligation. To do so, he had to reenlist and risk the chance of being redeployed at some point. How unbelievable, for someone who had given of himself and offered himself in service to this great Nation to come back and find that after that tour of duty, those benefits were gone.

In his records, here in this article, he said:

> I had the proud opportunity to serve my country in Iraq and I just wanted to move on.

He, and those like him, certainly deserve as much. We must act on behalf of these brave Americans because they deserve a policy more reflective of their sacrifice. Jamal fought and was wounded alongside active-duty servicemembers, but because of an inequity of the law, he is denied the same opportunity to utilize those educational benefits he has rightly earned, benefits that serve as a primary means of helping our service men and women make that difficult transition back into civilian life after serving in combat.

Some have raised concerns this amendment would have an effect on retention because it would provide a postservice portability of benefits. I wholeheartedly disagree. There are many valid personal and family reasons that influence a volunteer's decision to serve. Military analysts have consistently noted that reenlistment bonuses and lump sum cash payments have been effective in meeting and exceeding reenlistment goals in the Active and Reserve forces, not the educational benefits that are deferred over time.

That is why we have seen an unprecedented increase in the amount spent on these bonuses in recent years. At a time when one branch of our military is spending over $1 billion in cash bonuses, the least we can do is provide a fraction of those costs on investing in our citizen soldiers. After all, doing so only serves to enhance our Nation's competitiveness through the development of a more highly educated and productive workforce.

Young high school graduates in Arkansas and across this great country thinking about furthering their education and whether to join the National Guard or Reserves should know they will earn Montgomery GI benefits by enlisting, and even more if they are called up to duty.

When it is time to reenlist, they can keep all earned educational benefits with the opportunity to earn more by staying in or they can take with them in civilian life the benefits they have earned when they were called up to defend our great Nation.

As the daughter of a Korean war veteran, I was taught from an early age about the sacrifices of our troops and the sacrifices our troops have to make to keep our Nation free. I have been grateful for the service of so many of our brave men and women from the State of Arkansas and across this Nation. On behalf of them and their families, I will continue to fight to ensure they are provided with the benefits, the pay, and the health care they have earned.

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD letters of endorsement from the Military Officers Association of America, the National Reserve Association, the American Legion, the Air Force Sergeants of America, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and the Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the United States.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

AIR FORCE SERGEANTS ASSOCIATION,
Temple Hills, MD, July 9, 2007.

Hon. BLANCHE LAMBERT LINCOLN,
Dirksen Senate Office Building,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR LINCOLN: On behalf of our 130,000 AFSA members, I want to express our staunch support of the two amendments you are proposing regarding total force educational assistance enhancement. In recent years our military operations tempo requirements have been shared by members of the active duty, guard and reserve forces. Guard and Reserve forces now train and deploy alongside our active forces seven days a week, 365 days a year; therefore, opportunities for their use of educational benefits are diminished. These two amendments afford our total force a better balance of educational opportunities.

The first amendment will provide operational reservists with 10-year portability of educational benefits, thus mirroring those of our active duty force. Unlike current restrictive guidelines, this amendment will allow them to use the benefits they have earned after leaving tours of active duty. The second amendment will integrate the reserve MGIB programs into Title 38. This will allow for single source oversight of a more balanced approach to total force educational benefits. Both amendments will serve to enhance educational opportunities for AFSA's growing number of guard and reserve members.

Senator Lincoln, thank you for your continued focus on total force educational benefits. We stand ready to support you in this endeavor and others of mutual concern to our members should the need arise. Please feel free to contact me, or my Deputy Director of Military and Government Relations, Ruth Ewalt.

Sincerely,

RICHARD M. DEAN,
Chief Executive Officer.

THE AMERICAN LEGION,
Washington, DC, July 9, 2007.

Hon. BLANCHE LINCOLN,
U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR LINCOLN: On behalf of the 2.7 million members of The American Legion, I am writing to strongly endorse the amendments to the National Defense Authorization Act (S. 1547) that you propose to introduce to provide an extension of the delimiting date for the use of Montgomery GI Bill benefits for those members of the Reserve components who have been called to active duty and to recodify Title 10 Chapters 1606 and 1607 to Title 38.

The American Legion supports passage of major enhancements to the current All-Volunteer Force Education Assistance Program, better known as the Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB). This amendment would extend the delimiting date of the Reserve Educational Assistance Program (REAP) to ten years after separation from the Selected Reserve and Ready Reserve. Furthermore, this amendment would recodify Title 10 Chapters 1606 and 1607 (MGIB–SR and REAP) to Title 38 and thereby place these two programs under the same authority as the active duty MGIB, but leaving kickers under Title 10. We note that the current make-up of the operational military force requires that adjustments be made to support all Armed Forces members.

As the distinctions between the Active and Reserve Forces continue to fade, the difference between the Active and Reserve Forces of the MGIB should disappear accordingly. Benefits should remain commensurate with sacrifice and service. Today, approximately 40 percent of troops in Iraq are National Guard personnel or Reservists. Many members of the Reserve components would not be eligible to receive benefits while they are members of the Reserve components due to frequent mobilizations and other factors, yet they have honorably served their country in the Armed Forces. By extending the delimiting date to ten years after completion of service, Reservists will have an additional opportunity to use their MGIB benefits. Additionally, by enacting this legislation, future MGIB rates of the Reserve components would increase lock-step with the active duty rates and eliminate any inconsistencies.

The American Legion feels that all veterans should be treated equally regardless of

their Reserve National Guard status. An individual who was called to duty and served honorably should not have to remain in the Selected Reserve to use their earned benefits. We support legislation that would allow all Reservists and National Guard members to use their education benefits after separation regardless of disability status and if their enlistment contract expires.

In closing, The American Legion strongly endorses your proposed amendments to the National Defense Authorization Act and thanks you for your continuing support of America's veterans and their families.

Sincerely,

JAMES E. KOUTZ,
National Economic Commission.

ENLISTED ASSOCIATION OF THE NATIONAL GUARD OF THE UNITED STATES,
Alexandria, VA, July 10, 2007.

Hon. BLANCHE LINCOLN,
U.S. Senate,
Washington DC.

The Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the United States (EANGUS) is the only military service association that represents the interests of every enlisted soldier and airman in the Army and Air National Guard. With a constituency base of over 414,000 soldiers and airmen, their families, and a large retiree membership, EANGUS engages Capitol Hill on behalf of courageous Guard persons across this nation.

On behalf of EANGUS, I'd like to offer our letter of support for your amendment to H.R. 1585, the ''National Defense Authorization Act of 2008.'' Your amendment would move Chapter 1606 and Chapter 1607 benefits from Title 10 to Title 38. The amendment is cost neutral, corrects an actuarial budgeting issue in the original language, but keeps educational kickers with DOD under Title 10.

With the active component Montgomery GI Bill under Title 38 and the Selected Reserve program under Title 10, there are inconsistencies and inequities in the benefits for the same level of sacrifice by the service member. This would establish one program with one set of rules under one committee which can do nothing but better the educational future of our service members.

Thank you for your continued support of our military and veterans. If our association can be of further help, feel free to contact our Legislative Director, SGM (Ret) Frank Yoakum.

Working for America's Best!

MICHAEL P. CLINE,
Executive Director.

ENLISTED ASSOCIATION OF THE NATIONAL GUARD OF THE UNITED STATES,
Alexandria, VA, July 10, 2007.

Hon. BLANCHE LINCOLN,
U.S. Senate,
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The Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the United States (EANGUS) is the only military service association that represents the interests of every enlisted soldier and airman in the Army and Air National Guard. With a constituency base of over 414,000 soldiers and airmen, their families, and a large retiree membership, EANGUS engages Capitol Hill on behalf of courageous Guard persons across this nation.

On behalf of EANGUS, I'd like to offer our letter of support for your amendment to H.R. 1585, the ''National Defense Authorization Act of 2008.'' Your amendment would allow members of the Selected Reserve who are activated for 90 days or more or have already earned their Chapter 1607 Montgomery GI Bill benefits to have portability of their 1607 benefits upon the conclusion of their service, for up to 10 years from their last date of service. This provision would apply only to their 1607 benefits (those benefits earned through activated service) and not their 1606 benefits (their standard Selected Reserve educational benefits).

A very small segment of our nation's population has volunteered to defend the remainder of America during this long war. National Guard and Reservists called to active duty to defend the nation in the War on Terrorism are the only group of veterans who have no access to their MGIB benefits after completing their service commitment. It sends a signal that their service and sacrifice are not valued. As our nation's defenders, they deserve the same readjustment benefit as all other service men and women.

Thank you for your continued support of our military and veterans. If our association can be of further help, feel free to contact our Legislative Director, SGM (Ret) Frank Yoakum.

Working for America's Best!

MICHAEL P. CLINE,
Executive Director.

MILITARY OFFICERS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA,
Alexandria, VA, July 10, 2007.

Senator BLANCHE LINCOLN,
U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR LINCOLN: On behalf of the nearly 362,000 members of the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA), I am writing to thank you for your untiring support of our military men and women and in particular for your efforts to establish a ''total force'' GI Bill that matches educational benefits to service and sacrifice.

MOAA strongly supports your intention to sponsor floor amendments to the Senate version of the national defense authorization act that would forge a Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB) that better supports armed forces recruitment and helps our veterans including returning Guard and Reserve warriors to realize their full potential as citizens and soldiers.

Earlier this year, the House favorably endorsed a provision in its defense bill that authorizes the transfer of reserve educational benefits programs from the Armed Forces code to Title 38, the laws governing veterans' benefits. We applaud this action as an essential first step in MGIB reform and respectfully recommend that you and Senate colleagues co-sponsor identical language as an Amendment to the Senate defense authorization.

In addition, MOAA thanks you for your work last year in pressing for a 10-year readjustment benefit for mobilized reservists who earn MGIB entitlement under Chapter 1607 of 10 U.S. Code. We recommend that you again sponsor this critical equity provision.

Guard and Reserve servicemembers called to active duty to defend the nation in the War on Terror are the only group of veterans who have no access to their MGIB benefits after completing their service commitment. That's not only unfair, but it sends a signal that their service and sacrifice are not valued.

A fraction of our population—about 1%—is defending the rest of the nation during this long, difficult and complex war. We, the protected, must do all we can to ensure our National Guard and Reserve warriors realize their full potential as soldiers and citizens during and after their service.

MOAA and our colleagues in The Partnership for Veterans' Educational thank you most sincerely for your leadership in sponsoring amendments that honor the service and sacrifice of our Guard and Reserve warrior-citizens.

Sincerely,

NORBERT R. RYAN, Jr.,
President.

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES,
Washington, DC, July 11, 2007.

Hon. BLANCHE LINCOLN,
U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR LINCOLN: On behalf of the 2.4 million members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and our Auxiliaries, I would like to offer our support for your Amendment providing operational reservists with a 10-year portability of their Chapter 1607 (REAP) MGIB benefits.

Currently, active duty service members have up to ten years after their separation of service to utilize their MGIB benefits, while operational reservists must forfeit ALL of the educational benefits they earned on active duty once they separate. This benefit continues to be the only one that those who have served Selected Reserve activated duty in the War on Terrorism may not access when they eventually separate. Also, members of today's Selected Reserve are so busy training and deploying that they have little time to actually use their MGIB benefits. Their ability to use the benefit while serving is curtailed because of repealed deployments and denied entirely once they finish their service. This amendment would remedy this problem facing Guard and Reserve members.

The original GI Bill helped to create the middle class through easing the transition from active duty to civilian life, improving access to education and creating an unprecedented number of opportunities for millions of Americans. The GI Bill is a central transition tool aiding generations of Americans to reconnect and improve their families' lives.

Thank you for introducing this amendment and we look forward to working with you and your staff on this important legislation. Your stalwart support for America's veterans, and all who stand in defense of our nation, is appreciated.

Sincerely,

DENNIS CULLINAN,
National Legislative Service.

NAVAL RESERVE ASSOCIATION,
Alexandria, VA, July 10, 2007.

Senator BLANCHE LINCOLN,
U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR LINCOLN: On behalf of the Naval Reserve Association, and 76,000 current members of the Navy Reserve, I am writing to thank you for your untiring support of our military men and women and in particular for your efforts to establish a ''total force'' GI Bill that matches educational benefits to service and sacrifice.

NRA strongly supports your intention to sponsor floor amendments to the Senate version of the national defense authorization act that would forge a Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB) that better supports armed forces recruitment and helps our veterans including returning Guard and Reserve warriors to realize their full potential as citizens and soldiers.

The House favorably endorsed a provision in its defense bill that authorizes the transfer of reserve educational benefits programs from the Armed Forces code to Title 38, the laws governing veterans' benefits. We applaud this action as an essential first step in MGIB reform and respectfully recommend that you and Senate colleagues co-sponsor identical language as an Amendment to the Senate defense authorization.

In addition, NRA thanks you for your work last year in pressing for a 10-year readjustment benefit for mobilized reservists who

earn MGIB entitlement under Chapter 1607 of 10 U.S. Code. We recommend that you again sponsor this critical equity provision.

Guard and Reserve servicemembers called to active duty to defend the nation in the War on Terror are the only group of veterans who have no access to their MGIB benefits after completing their service commitment. That's not only unfair, but it sends a signal that their service and sacrifice are not valued. Since 9–11, over 585,000 Guard and Reserve members have been called to serve during this critical time.

A fraction of our population—about 1%—is defending the rest of the nation during this long, difficult and complex war. We must do all we can to ensure our National Guard and Reserve warriors realize their full potential as citizens during and after their service as Sailors, Airmen, Marines, Soldiers, and Guardsmen.

NRA and our colleagues in The Partnership for Veterans' Education, and the TMC thank you most sincerely for your leadership in sponsoring amendments that honor the service and sacrifice of our Guard and Reserve warrior-citizens.

Sincerely,

C. WILLIAMS COANE,
RADM, USN (retired),
Executive Director.

Mrs. LINCOLN. Again, I urge my colleagues—I strongly urge my colleagues—to support these amendments. These are the right things to do on behalf of these unbelievable individuals, these unbelievable Americans, these citizen soldiers who leave their homes and their jobs. They leave their communities and their families to go in the bravest of manners to defend this great country, to defend our freedom. It is the least we can do for those we owe so much and to reassure future generations that a grateful nation will not forget them when their military service is complete. And, more importantly, that we will partner with them to reach the ultimate in their potential, the ultimate in their desire to make themselves the best they can be when they return home.

I encourage any colleagues to support both of our amendments.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

AMENDMENT NO. 2019

Mr. KERRY. Madam President, I rise today to speak to the Levin-Reid-Kerry et. al amendment with respect to Iraq. Today the President made a partial report on Iraq. And while it is true there has been some tactical military success, no amount of spinning, no amount of focus on the military component can obscure the bottom line reality in Iraq today.

That reality is clear. There has been no meaningful political progress. In the long run, that is the only progress that matters, that makes a difference to our policy because it is the politics that is producing the killing and the chaos in Iraq.

Unless and until Iraqis resolve their fundamental political differences, any security gains will be temporary at best, particularly given the numbers of troops that are committed to that security, and given the difficulties that we already understand in terms of deployment schedules.

That is a fundamental underlying reality that colleagues in the Senate need to focus on. Any tactical gain in the short term, whether it is in Anbar Province, Diyala, or elsewhere, is welcome now, but the fact is, it is fundamentally temporary absent the political resolution that is critical to ultimately ending the violence.

So moving the goalposts, dressing up the failure to meet strict benchmarks as progress, those are, frankly, rationalizations for failure over the long term. They are not plans for success. It is hard when you measure the absence of political progress over the course of the last months against these temporary tactical gains. It is very difficult to suggest that we are doing anything except sort of committing American forces, troops, to a kind of holding action for hope, hope that there is some turn and some kind of outcome.

I think most of us would rather have the U.S. military committed to what we all consider to be a winning strategy, not a hopeful strategy. Meanwhile, in the middle of the President's report, partial report today, another, frankly, more chilling and important report tells us that while we have been bogged down and distracted in Iraq, al-Qaida, which the President keeps referring to as the central enemy, al-Qaida has found a safe heaven in Pakistan. Al-Qaida has rebuilt its organization.

Today, top intelligence officials tell the United States that al-Qaida is better positioned to strike the West than they have been at any time since 9/11. I think any American hearing this, after these several thousand lives have been sacrificed in Iraq, to hear that al-Qaida, which is the principal focus of the war on terrorism, is stronger today after all of these billions of dollars and lives lost in Iraq, is a stunning turn of events, shocking turn of events, one that ought to stop everyone in the Senate to collectively turn our policy to where it ought to be, which is the focus on al-Qaida and not the focus in Iraq.

In fact, what has happened in Anbar Province proves that al-Qaida can become more of a minimalist kind of threat in Iraq itself when measured against the threat of the political killing that is taking place between Sunni and Shia, Shia and Sunni.

Our principal focus, notwithstanding this report from our own intelligence agencies, is where? It is on Iraq. Not principally where it ought to be, in Afghanistan and northwest Pakistan. Iraq is not just a distraction from the fight against terrorists, it is, frankly, al-Qaida's best fundraising tool. It is al-Qaida's best organizational magnet. You did not have to wait until September in order to understand what is happening today and what will continue to happen in the absence of any measure of political progress.

So what we need is not a step away by the Senate, not some sort of delaying tactic to wait for the magic of hope to produce itself in September, what we need is the hard work of the Senate to produce a policy for change now. Two days ago I heard some of my colleagues come to the floor and question why we are having this debate now when the White House is going to report on the escalation in September?

I heard the Senator from Alabama, Mr. SESSIONS, say: This is not the time to alter the policy we established about 2 months ago.

I heard Senator KYL from Arizona say: We need to wait for the report in September before making judgments about what to do next.

I heard the senior Senator from Arizona, Mr. MCCAIN, ask—and these are his words: Why do we have to keep taking up the Iraq issue when we know full well in September there will be a major debate on this issue?

Well, I have respect for all of the opinions of all colleagues in the Senate. I particularly have respect and know how much my friend, my colleague from Arizona, cares about American troops and understands the price of war. But I think that is the wrong question. Those are the wrong questions.

The American people understand why we ought to debate this issue now. The answer is very simple, and it is very compelling. It is because American soldiers are dying now, and because the escalation, the purpose of the escalation—which was to provide cover for the Iraqi politicians to make compromises—can be judged a failure now.

When a policy is not working, you do not wait for an artificial timeline to fix it; you fix it now. The very same voices who have come to the floor for years condemning artificial deadlines now want to wait for more Americans to die and more Iraqis to kill each other, until the artificial deadline of September, regardless of what the facts tell us today.

I believe they want to do it so President Bush can deliver his report, even though we know today what the heart of that report will be. In fact, the President delivered a partial report today. I think most people understand, because it is obvious, that the facts are beginning to accelerate the need to be able to have a more rapid response.

The report in September, I guarantee my colleagues, will reflect exactly what we see today. Violence will be up in some places, and it will be down in others. There will be some tactical successes. Our military will deserve the credit for those, and our soldiers will have earned those tactical successes the hard way. But no matter what sacrifices they have made, and they will have made extraordinary sacrifices, the fact remains that absent the political differences, which already we are hearing they will not make, and they are not prepared to engage in, absent that, the civil war will be raging on and squabbling Iraqi politicians and sectarian forces will refuse to compromise. And, most importantly, despite the so-called breathing room that

the escalation was supposed to provide, there will be no real political progress.

What is happening now is as disturbing as anything I have seen in the 23 years that I have been in the Senate. I came here in 1985 during the height of the Cold War. President Reagan was at that time leading us in an effort to try to confront the continued nuclear confrontation under which we had lived since the end of World War II. I think all of us remember well what a critical moment of confrontation that was.

But I came here principally on this issue of war and peace. It was also a time when we were deeply caught up in an illegal war in Central America, and the issue of the contras came to dominate the debate in Washington for a period of time. I mention that because the issues of the lessons of war and how America goes to war and what we do has been something that has been at the center of my involvement in public life.

I must say, what I see today happening, I regret, reminds me of what I thought was a lesson that we had learned in the course of the Vietnam war, and something that we had always resolved to avoid.

Many of us remember how then-President Nixon continued our involvement because he didn't want history to judge him as having lost a war, notwithstanding that he didn't begin it, he inherited it. So we continued our intervention in a civil war for pride and to save face, not because we had a winning strategy. Presidents and politicians may have the luxury of worrying about losing face or worrying about their legacy, but the Senate has the responsibility to worry about young Americans and innocent civilians who are losing their lives now for a policy that is failing now.

In recent weeks, some have reminded me of a question I asked when I returned from service in Vietnam almost 40 years ago, when I spoke from my heart about what I thought was wrong with that war. Back in 1971, I was privileged to testify before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and raised the question: How do you ask a man to be the last man to die for a mistake? I never thought I would be reliving that question again. I never thought I would have parents of young Americans killed in Iraq look me in the eye and tell me: Senator, my son died in vain.

On a personal level, I happen to disagree with that statement. I think each of my colleagues probably does also. I believe that any American—I heard the Senator from Idaho talking about this—no matter the bad decisions made in Washington, no matter the faults of the policy, any American who gives up life or limb for love of country has never done so in vain. Because service to country under any circumstances is the highest calling there is. I would like to be able to tell those parents that their sons and daughters died for a policy that was equal to their service and equal to their sacrifice. I thought we had learned something from Vietnam. I thought we had learned something from a war that went on and on, a war that was escalated long after Presidents and policymakers knew that no number of American troops could end the civil war between the Vietnamese. Here we are back in the same place today, where no number of American troops in Iraq can end a civil war between Iraqis.

I think most of our colleagues understand this war in Iraq was a disastrous mistake and the policy being pursued today which doesn't resolve the fundamental differences that are propelling Iraqis to kill Iraqis is itself a mistake. So we are seeing a war prolonged and prosecuted not for a winning strategy. No general has come to us, no administration official has come to us in 407, where we meet for our secret briefings, or in any committee and said: This is a winning strategy. What we have is a hope, a wing, and a prayer that somehow these Iraqis are going to come together and make some decisions.

But we don't even have the kind of leverage diplomacy that war deserves to maximize the ability of those people to come together. We are seeing a war prolonged to prosecute it not for a winning strategy but for a refusal to accept reality.

What is that reality? We have heard it from General Casey, General Abizaid, General Petraeus, from the Secretary of State, from the President, and the Vice President—there is no military solution.

Each Member has to ask themselves in these next days, what is our responsibility to our soldiers and to our country—not to our political party, not to an ideology. What is our responsibility to the soldiers and to country? I think it is pretty straightforward. It is to get the policy right, not in September but now.

The only question on this Senate floor now is whether we are going to have the courage to change the policy and get it right. The only question is whether we are going to stop this administration from adding to the thousands of mistakes compounded one upon the other or whether we are going to say: Well, we would like to do it. We kind of have the responsibility to. We hear people in cloakrooms privately saying: I think it is wrong. Boy, it is screwed up. But it doesn't translate into votes. It is that simple. If you think the policy is broken now, then we ought to fix it now, because lives are at stake, as are the interests of our country. Our security is at stake, and the war on terror is at stake.

If anybody needs a reminder of the urgency, I say to them respectfully: You don't have to wait until September to get a reminder. All you have to do is go out to Arlington Cemetery almost any day of the week. You can see the many military funerals but particularly those of servicemembers who served in Iraq and Afghanistan. You can see the precise military honor given to each of those soldiers, the flags draping the coffin rippling in the breeze. You can see the honor guard folding that flag meticulously into that sharp triangle of blue and white stars and then handing it to the loved ones, the wife, the mother, husband, father. Then hear those words: On behalf of a grateful nation, and watch people crumble.

We are losing about 100 soldiers a month. I ask my colleagues: How many more times is that scene going to be repeated between now and September? How many more times is that scene going to be repeated before this institution does what it is supposed to do? How are you going to feel in September if you finally wind up saying: Well, I think the policy is broken now? And what will happen with respect to the parents of those soldiers and their families, those who gave their lives so we could wait for a report to tell us the obvious, what we know today?

Over a year ago, Senator FEINGOLD and I came to the Senate floor and we asked our colleagues to confront this very reality, to recognize the fact that our own generals knew even then there was no American military solution to an Iraqi civil war, to acknowledge that the political progress necessary for the Iraqis to end their civil war would come only if America compelled them to act by imposing meaningful deadlines and leveraging those deadlines with legitimate diplomatic effort. That was 1 year ago. We got 13 votes. People said at the time: Well, we are not ready. I am not there yet. One thousand Americans have died since then. I ask those folks: What about now? Are you ready now or will it take another thousand?

It is not the numbers per se, because America has lost many more people in other wars. What it is is the numbers measured against the strategy and the progress. That is where our responsibility lies. By any measurement, we have a requirement to respond now. Those 13 votes have now grown to more than 50 votes today, but still the policy is the same.

Today Senator LEVIN and Senator REED, myself and others are asking the Members of the Senate to look hard at what we are proposing. Don't fall prey to the quick hit, easy stereotype, political denunciation of what is happening here. This is a legitimate policy proposal which, if it were joined in in a bipartisan way, would send a critical message to Iraqis and to folks in the region about the dynamic that has to change in order to truly meet all of our strategic interests in that region.

I have heard some people use descriptions that it is a recipe for failure. Well, measured against what, No. 1? No. 2, it is the only way, according to most of the experts outside the Senate, to actually leverage a shift in behavior by the Iraqis who today believe they can continue to play the American presence off for their own political purposes. The fact is, it is only by shifting

to a different deployment, which is what we do. There is no precipitous, complete withdrawal from Iraq, to the chagrin of some people who think there absolutely should be. There is a responsible, calculated, carefully timed process by which, together with our own deployment schedules, we have laid out an ability for the President to continue to finish the training, to chase al-Qaida and prosecute the war on terror, and to protect American forces.

According to the Iraq Study Group, according to all of the outside analyses that have looked at this issue, the fact is, those are the only legitimate things we ought to be called on to do a year from now. Nobody is talking about next month or 2 months from now that suddenly Iraq would be abandoned. The fact is, we have come to a moment where the private hand wringing we see in the elevators and in private conversations has run its course. It is time to speak one's conscience publicly through votes, not privately.

It is legitimate to suggest that to wait until September for a report, where most of the intelligence community and most of the observers we have talked to who have followed this issue closely and report to us appropriately tell us themselves that there is precious little, if any, advance with respect to the political compromise, makes it exceedingly difficult to be able to suggest that. I think we have lost 523 Americans who have died since the escalation started. In the next 2 months at the rate of 100 a month, you are looking at over 200 that we know will die for a policy that remains a mistake over those next 2 months.

Let me lay out for a moment where we are with respect to this political solution, because it makes the picture even more stark. It has been over 1 year now since the Maliki government took power. What have we asked of them? What have they agreed to? What have they accomplished?

Virtually nothing accomplished politically. But it is not the first time the Iraqis have not met any of the requests made of them and items agreed to. The fact is that 9 months ago was the deadline for Iraqis to approve a new oil law and a provincial election law. Neither one has been approved. Eight months ago was the deadline for a new de-Baathfication law to help bring the Sunnis into the government. Guess what. It hasn't been approved, and nothing happened as a consequence of its not being approved. Seven months ago was the deadline for Iraqis to approve legislation to disarm the militias. Absolutely no progress has been made on this crucial legislation and the militias continue to wreak havoc. Six months ago was the deadline for Iraqis to complete a constitutional review process. The constitutional committee hasn't even drafted proposed amendments, and the Iraqis remain far apart on basic issues such as federalism and the fate of the divided city of Kirkuk.

So we find ourselves today no closer to a political solution than we were when the Maliki government took power over 1 year ago, but over 1,100 American troops have given their lives since that time. We are no closer than we were in January when the President decided to disregard key elements of the Iraq Study Group and announced the escalation, but over 600 additional American troops have died since then. Without real deadlines to pressure the Iraqis to a new reality, we will not be able to leverage their behavior. If you can't do it that way, having seen that we can't do it this other way, it may be that you can't do it, in which case American troops should not be caught in the middle of what they are determined to pursue.

One-third of the Cabinet in Iraq, including the major Sunni party, is currently boycotting the Government. Iraq's Parliament, which cannot even muster a quorum more than once every week or two, is reportedly still going to go on vacation for the entire month of August without having met their schedule.

It is pretty hard to discern how you turn to the parent of a troop who is maimed or killed in the course of the month of August while the Iraqi politicians are vacationing without even meeting one of the political requirements that has been set out. So I think there is a guarantee they are not going to meet the political progress before September, absent some change that is not currently on the horizon.

The front page of Sunday's Washington Post tells us pretty much all we need to know:

> [T]he Iraqi government is unlikely to meet any of the political and security goals or timelines President Bush set for it in January when he announced a major shift in U.S. policy.

So time is not on our side, and it has not been on our side for a long time, and no escalation is going to change that.

The President keeps telling us, and tells Americans, that we must not abandon the fight against al-Qaida in Iraq and leave them with a safe haven. Well, how many times do we have to say it? We all agree with that. That is not even on the table. No one is talking about abandoning Iraq to al-Qaida. No one is talking about not continuing to prosecute the war against al-Qaida.

In fact, in the Levin-Reed-Kerry amendment there is a specific statement with respect to a specific provision with respect to the President's need to continue to prosecute al-Qaida in Iraq. We all agree with that. That is not the issue. What it is is a phony argument, and I think our troops and the country deserve better than a phony argument. We deserve more than a Presidential straw man in a debate while real men and women are fighting and putting their lives on the line for us.

Our bill keeps in place the troops necessary to prosecute al-Qaida. Our bill keeps in place the troops necessary to complete the training of Iraqis to stand up for themselves. Our bill keeps in place the troops necessary to protect American facilities and forces. And 1 year from now that is all our mission ought to be.

We have troops in many other parts of the region—Kuwait, Bahrain, in the Gulf, and many other places—and we have the ability to do what we need to do to represent our interests with respect to Iran and with respect to the region. But we must redefine our mission and focus on our vital national interests, and chief among those is fighting al-Qaida smartly.

I believe it is fundamentally wrong to sacrifice over 100 American troops per month as we stretch our military past the breaking point for a policy that we know does not address the fundamental issues and resolve those issues. The troops deserve to know they are being asked to sacrifice for real progress. It is wrong to keep spending over $10 billion each month—$456 billion in total—for this war of choice. We cannot continue telling Americans that refereeing an Iraqi civil war is worth more in our blood and treasure than it would have been to provide Head Start for a year to 60 million of our children or to provide nearly 4 years of health care to every child in America or to provide a tenfold increase in foreign aid to express the real face and values of America all over the world.

In fact, all of the money that has been spent in Iraq could have funded a Middle East development plan nearly four times as large as the Marshall Plan, a plan that would have helped reduce radicalism rather than enflame it.

We also cannot continue to squander our moral authority and offer al-Qaida a greater recruiting tool than they could ever have hoped to create for themselves.

So my hope is we would work to find a genuine bipartisan majority in the Senate, a majority of conscience, a pragmatic and patriotic majority committed to work across party lines to right a failed policy in Iraq and leave in place a sustainable strategy.

Now, let me say a word about that to my colleagues.

We keep hearing the words ''precipitous'' and ''failure.'' None of us want failure. We want success. What we are hearing today is—we may have differing views about how you get it; it is not often talked about, but it is clear, and I think it should be talked about—that if we are unsuccessful in seeking the kind of political compromise necessary, there will be a lot of killing that will continue, and there will be people who have put themselves on the line to fight for their own future and for democracy whom we will have obligations to. We need to live up to them.

That is another lesson of Vietnam.

We need desperately to work together in the best traditions of the Senate and the country to find what I

think is real common ground—that we have interests in the region, interests in Iraq, interests with respect to the Middle East peace process, that we will have long-term interests and obligations no matter who is President of the United States or how we approach this and that we need to shift course in order to get to that place.

Now, some have insisted on seeing this entire issue exclusively through the prism of victory or defeat over an enemy in battle. But that simply is not the reality of what we see in Iraq today in a civil war. Iraq is a chaotic society, a failed state. The real question is: How do you work together to craft a strategy that is sustainable militarily, politically, financially, and diplomatically? There are areas of broad bipartisan agreement for those who are willing to do that work of building consensus.

First of all, I think there is agreement there will be some residual presence among at least the majority of the people on our side of the aisle. In addition, all of us are concerned that our redeployment from Iraq must not happen in a manner that draws us back into a greater conflict at a later date. We ought to be working together to lay the groundwork not just for the next few months but for the next years down the road throughout the region.

There is broad agreement that we must refocus our mission on what ought to be our core objective: fighting terrorists. Indeed, in the alternative, we are creating more terrorists daily as a result of our policy than if we were to shift it.

So refocusing the mission means American troops should be hunting and killing al-Qaida and not being killed on patrol through the streets of Baghdad in the middle of a civil strife where they become a target of opportunity for any person who wants to create a headline.

It means training Iraqis to patrol Iraqi streets and refocusing our mission on preventing this war from spreading into a regional conflict.

And finally—and this is perhaps most important of all because you cannot get to any of the other things if you do not do this; and we have not done it—we need to embark on a major diplomatic outreach to restore America's influence and credibility in the Middle East. I will offer an amendment asking the Senate to go on record supporting a standing conference for the region, including the Permanent Five of the United Nations and all the regional partners and neighbors and parties, in order to reclaim the diplomatic initiative in Iraq and throughout the region.

This debate also ought to be part of a larger framework. In Lebanon, the Siniora Government is hanging on by a thread as it confronts Sunni extremists sympathetic to al-Qaida in the north and Shia extremists led by an empowered Hezbollah in the south. Iran and Syria have stepped into the vacuum, leading reconstruction efforts after the last war and creating a greater connection to the people in the street as a result. Now they are rearming Hezbollah for the next war. The Palestinians have fought a brief civil war that left an emboldened Hamas in control of Gaza, and again Iran and Syria stand poised to take advantage of that.

Never has there been a more important moment to try to move together collectively, diplomatically in that effort. None of these events, frankly, should have taken us by surprise because King Abdullah of Jordan loudly warned of three civil wars last year. Yet time and again we seem to be taken by surprise when events on the ground spin out of control, and then we are left scrambling to patch together an ad hoc response from half a world away. That simply cannot continue. It is not in our interest. It certainly is not in the interest of the region.

So we need a reliable multilateral regional forum for preventing these situations from becoming crises—and for responding when they do. That is why we have to lead the effort to convene Iraq's leaders and key regional players in the effort to do that.

In the end, we need to reach for the best traditions of the Senate and look back to the bipartisan accomplishments of men such as Republican Senator Arthur Vandenberg, who chaired the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and worked closely with Democratic President Harry Truman, and together they helped to create—were the principal leaders in creating—a new world order and a winning strategy in the Cold War. They cooperated on a series of institutions and treaties—NATO, the IMF, the U.N. Charter, the Marshall Plan—and all of those outlived both of them.

When Arthur Vandenberg passed away in 1951, the Chaplain at his funeral said:

> We thank Thee that in the gathering storm of aggression which now rages, Thy servant Arthur H. Vandenberg, in a time that called for greatness, grew into greatness.

This is a long time since the time of Arthur Vandenberg and Harry Truman, but for the Senate to live up to its own obligations and possibilities, I believe we ought to go back to the politics that stops at the water's edge when it comes to foreign policy. I think we ought to grab that opportunity here and now to change our policy in Iraq. Why? Not for partisan advantage but to strengthen our country in the pursuit of our interests in the region and to truly support our troops and provide the kind of direction that will strengthen America and strengthen us in the war on terror.

Mr. STEVENS. Madam President, I support this amendment for the dignified treatment of wounded warriors. It creates a comprehensive policy for the care and management of wounded military servicemembers and addresses the health care needs of servicemembers and their families. We urgently need this provision for a seamless transition from military to civilian life.

The policy and standards for the DOD and the Veterans' Administration in this provision will streamline medical and physical disability evaluation processes between the two agencies, allowing for more immediate attention to the care of our wounded instead of focusing on paperwork for the board. This is an exhausting process.

The care of our wounded servicemembers' families is addressed by reimbursing them for related expenses such as travel to medical appointments, or providing medical care to those family members who are providing support to severely injured servicemembers.

This is needed legislation to continue and enhance treatment and diagnosis for traumatic brain injury and post traumatic stress disorder, by developing Centers of Excellence, establishing requirements for research, and developing a standard process for pre and post deployment screenings. The amendment will assure a fully coordinated system and it improves the medical tracking process and establishes protocols for quality assurance for deployed servicemembers.

This legislation also directs a jointly integrated policy, created and administered by the Department of Defense and the Veterans' Administration, to better manage and transition servicemembers exiting active service to civilian life.

It requires these two Departments to develop a joint electronic medical record by 2010.

It establishes a joint DOD–VA program office that is responsible for the development, testing, and implementation of the joint health record.

This will expedite the transition of servicemembers to the VA and allow for immediate and uninterrupted treatment by VA clinics and hospitals.

The policies set forth in this amendment will enhance the care for the severely ill or injured by ensuring those former servicemembers who were injured between 2001 and 2012 will receive medical and dental care up to 5 years after separation from the military.

These initiatives are all very much in need to better provide the support and care our dedicated servicemembers deserve, especially after putting their lives on the line.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Madam President, I rise today in strong support of the Dignified Treatment of Wounded Warriors Act. This legislation will bring long needed reforms to the transition process between the Department of Defense and the VA.

The controversy at Walter Reed again brought to light the shortcomings in the process our returning veterans must deal with in their difficult transition from soldier to civilian. Just as the living conditions that came to light are unacceptable, so too are the countless stories detailing the maze of forms, hearings, and medical evaluations that prevent so many of our veterans from getting the health care and benefits they need and a grateful nation wishes to provide them.

Too often, it seems that rather than thanking the soldier for their sacrifice, this system sets up yet another battle of bureaucracy. Too often, it seems that the system is stacked against the very soldiers it is designed to help. Too often, veterans must seek out their own treatment options and benefits or risk missing deadlines and losing benefits. It doesn't have to be this way. We have an obligation not only to fulfill the promises we make to America's fighting men and women, but to do so in a manner that ensures the benefits we owe them are made readily available.

That this bill will push DOD and VA to prepare a comprehensive and coordinated strategy to help the soldier in their transition to civilian is a critical correction to a long-flawed process. Currently, soldiers can be discharged with little more than directions to the nearest VA and a stack of paperwork a team of lawyers would struggle to complete. The chasm that currently exists between DOD and VA has swallowed too many bright and talented individuals trying to put their life back together after sacrificing so much for this great Nation.

This amendment requires a comprehensive policy on the transition of our wounded soldiers back to civilian life. It will push the reform of such problem areas such as the medical hold status, a situation in which soldiers can sit for months on end with their life on hold while DOD decides what to do with them; the medical evaluation process where soldiers' disability ratings are chronically underrated; and improved sharing of records between DOD and VA, amazingly not a common practice even in this day and age.

I am particularly proud to support this bill because of the priority it places on treatment of traumatic brain injuries and post-traumatic stress disorder. Medical research still has a long way to go before we can wholly treat TBI's and PTSD, but this bill goes a long way towards creating an extensive strategy for diagnosing and rehabilitating servicemembers afflicted with these conditions.

We must lift the stigma and educate soldiers that these conditions are as real as a bullet wound, and can be just as deadly. This bill does just that. The emphasis on pre-and post-deployment assessments will revolutionize the military's process of diagnosis and treatment.

Due to the unique nature of these injuries and the delay in symptoms that so often occurs, many veterans have gone without treatment and suffered a lifetime of pain and anguish because we have not had these safeguards in place. Thankfully, with this bill the Congress is saying, ''no longer.'' No longer will we stand idly by while veterans are discharged from DOD and fade into the shadows of society. No longer will we turn a blind eye to cries for help from America's bravest. No longer will we ignore the needs of veterans who have sacrificed so much for their country.

I am proud to support this proposal extending health care to medically retired servicemembers for 3 additional years. Sometimes we forget that when these veterans leave the military, they leave behind their career, their pay and their way of life. By allowing them steady access to health care, we give them some sense of normalcy as they begin a new chapter in their lives.

I do believe there is much work left to be done, and as a Congress we must remain vigilant to ensure that the spirit as well as the letter of this legislation becomes law and the reforms are carried out to their fullest. One way of remaining vigilant in the pursuit of a smooth transition from solider to veteran is to provide resources to outside watchdogs to help ensure transparency and advocacy in the process. That is why I have introduced the Veterans Navigator Act, which will provide $25 million in Federal grants over the next 5 fiscal years to create a pilot program to fund ''Navigators'' to help veterans enter the system and will build on existing programs run by veterans service organizations, VSOs, and other experienced organizations. While the dignified treatment of wounded warriors amendment will bring about many long-overdue reforms to the transition process, veteran navigators could be particularly critical as independent nongovernmental sources of information and advice for the veteran during their transition. In fact, navigators could play a vital role in the successful implementation of the changes made in the Dignified Treatment of Wounded Warriors Act, as they can be watchdog and counsel, whistleblower and advocate. In short, because the veteran navigators will not be part of the government system, they will be better able to advocate for veterans.

The very least that we can do is ensure that all of these brave men and women are able to access the medical benefits to which they are entitled and the care which they require, particularly in this, their time of greatest need. At some point in each of our lives, we might need a guiding hand to help us find our way. These brave men and women went out across the world for us, with this bill I believe we are stepping out for them.

Mr. WARNER. Madam President, providing for our men and women in uniform, and their families, is our highest priority on the Armed Services Committee, and this bill will provide a comprehensive approach to caring for those, who through their courage, have sacrificed greatly for our country. Our Nation owes these brave men and women nothing less than the finest possible care.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. MCCAIN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent, if it is agreeable with Senator LEVIN, that Senator STABENOW be allowed 10 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Mr. LEVIN. Madam President, that, of course, would be fine with me, but we have a vote scheduled at 4 o'clock. If that is going to delay that vote, we better clear that with folks who may be relying upon a 4 o'clock vote.

Madam President, how long will the Senator from Michigan wish to speak?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Ms. STABENOW. Ideally, 10 minutes, 8 minutes—somewhere in that range—7, 8 minutes.

Mr. LEVIN. Madam President, then I join in that unanimous consent request that the Senator from Michigan be recognized for up to 10 minutes.

Mr. MCCAIN. So 3 minutes after 4 o'clock.

Mr. LEVIN. Now the vote will be delayed until about 5 after 4 o'clock.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan is recognized.

Ms. STABENOW. Madam President, first, I thank the distinguished Senator from Massachusetts for his eloquence and passion and knowledge and leadership on all of these critical issues related to Iraq and what we need to be doing to keep our country safe.

I thank also Senator CARL LEVIN, our senior Senator from Michigan, for all his wonderful leadership as he has moved this bill and so many other bills through the Congress that deal with supporting our troops, being a strong military, and now making sure we are there for our troops when they come home.

I thank also Senator JOHN MCCAIN for his graciousness today, as well as for his work with Senator LEVIN. I thank Senator DANNY AKAKA, chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, and LARRY CRAIG, the ranking member, for their bipartisan effort.

This has truly been an excellent example of what we can do when we work together on something such as the wounded warrior amendment, which I am proud to be a cosponsor of. But the bipartisan effort, the effort between two committees of the Senate, working together, has been wonderful, and we now have an amendment in front of us, the Levin-McCain and others amendment, that is critically important to pass.

I stand here today as a daughter of a World War II Navy vet and the wife of an Air Force vet of 14 years, and I am very proud of what we are doing and what our new majority is doing to advocate for our troops and our veterans.

For too many soldiers and marines, the flight out of Iraq or Afghanistan is the first step in a long journey back to the lives they left at home.

Those wounded in combat face a second tour of duty—a tour of duty marked by long hours of rehabilitation, often painful medical procedures, and a physical or psychological adjustment to a life lived with the scars of war.

When the men and women of our Armed Forces put on the uniform, they

are making a promise to defend America. In return, we promise them that their Nation will be there for them when they come home.

Our Armed Forces truly are the finest patriots our Nation has to offer—truly. As members of an all-volunteer military, charged with defending the greatest democracy on Earth, our soldiers and sailors and airmen and marines have proven their bravery, courage, and honor time and again. They don't need more empty promises. What they need and what we owe them is a system that works for them when they are wounded, either physically or mentally, in the service of our country.

I am very proud of the fact that our new majority has made both supporting our troops and our veterans one of our very top priorities. The budget resolution we passed earlier this year places fully funding veterans' health care, working with all of our veterans service organizations, as one of our very top budget priorities. Now we have in front of us another important way to support our troops coming home who are wounded.

We are a nation at war. We know that. We are currently ill-equipped to deal with the human consequences of that war.

The administration's failed planning for this war did not end at the borders of Iraq. It stretched into Walter Reed Hospital and into every veterans' health care facility, into every community that has sent an able-bodied son or daughter off to fight, only to be faced with the realities of an injured veteran returning home. Repeated redeployments have only compounded the problem, as we talked about yesterday, as we debated the important Webb amendment which, I might add, was passed and supported by 56 Members, although we could not break the filibuster of the Republican caucus. Mental health injuries have increased dramatically as troops have been forced to face their second, third, and fourth combat redeployments. The lack of time between redeployments has increased the physical danger to our troops by sending them back on the front lines, overtired, underequipped, and without the increased training they need.

Our heavy reliance on our National Guard has resulted in wounded veterans returning to cities and towns all across our country, often to communities that are far away from veterans' health care facilities or the traditional infrastructure of the military health care system. Our troops deserve better in Iraq, and they deserve better when they come home.

Earlier this year a bright light was turned on the deplorable conditions faced by some of our returning wounded veterans at Walter Reed. The true tragedy of these events is that they are merely a symptom of larger problems with a system that too often has let our soldiers and veterans down. I am very proud of the leadership coming from our caucus, our leader, Senator REID, and our caucus leadership, in focusing the light of day and taking action that has brought us today to this very important amendment. There is no room for bureaucratic or political squabbling when it comes to the treatment of our soldiers and our veterans. The system should serve one mandate and one mandate only: providing the highest quality service available to all of them, while causing them the least amount of personal hassle and frustration.

Senator LEVIN's wounded warrior amendment is a much needed step, and it is a needed systemwide approach that has been put together on a bipartisan basis. It addresses many problems that plague this far too often burdened and difficult process while enhancing health care for wounded service men and women, including treatment of traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress disorder, which has been viewed now as the signature injury of this war.

The number of casualties in Iraq and Afghanistan is growing every day. These brave men and women don't have time to wait. They need their country to step up right now, and that is what we have the opportunity to do together with this amendment.

We have many disagreements in this body. The various pieces of legislation we face on a daily basis require robust debate and oftentimes we find ourselves on different sides of the issue of the day. I can't imagine, though, how any one of us would oppose this amendment. The facts are simple. The system is broken and in need of repair. The ones paying the price are our soldiers, our veterans, and their families. We need to make changes and we need to make them now.

This was a war of choice in Iraq, not of necessity. But dealing with the consequences of this war is unquestionably a necessity. Our troops have done their job and now we need to do ours. I urge my colleagues to support the wounded warrior amendment.

AMENDMENT NO. 2024

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there are now 2 minutes equally divided prior to a vote on amendment No. 2024 offered by the Senator from Alabama, Mr. SESSIONS.

Who yields time?

The Senator from Alabama is recognized.

Mr. SESSIONS. Madam President, this amendment, which has been modified in agreement with my colleagues on the Democratic side of the aisle to reach an amendment I think we can all support, would state it is the policy of the United States that we should have a system that will protect the United States and its allies against Iranian ballistic missiles. The findings are that Congress finds that Iran maintains a nuclear program in continued defiance of the international community, while developing ballistic missiles of increasing sophistication and range that pose a threat to the forward-deployed forces of the United States and to its North Atlantic Treaty Organization allies in Europe, and which eventually pose a threat to the United States homeland.

That is the problem we are dealing with. So we would state with clarity, so there is not any doubt about it—and I think our bill we passed in committee does that, but some have misinterpreted it, in my opinion—that it would state that it is our policy to develop and deploy as soon as technologically possible, in conjunction with allies and other nations wherever possible, an effective defense against the threat of Iran as described in the previous paragraph.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator's time has expired.

Mr. SESSIONS. And to develop an appropriate response.

I thank the Chair, and I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida is recognized.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Madam President, the amendment as modified is within the provisions of the funding in the underlying bill, because the bill would authorize an additional $315 million to increase or accelerate several near-term missile defense programs that are specifically designed to protect our forward-deployed forces, our allies, and our friends, for example, the Patriot PAC–3, the Aegis BMD program, and the THAAD system. So it is entirely consistent.

I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There is a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Delaware (Mr. BIDEN), the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. DODD), the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. JOHNSON), and the Senator from Illinois (Mr. OBAMA) are necessarily absent.

Mr. LOTT. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. VITTER).

The result was announced—yeas 90, nays 5, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 245 Leg.]

YEAS—90

Akaka	Coburn	Harkin
Alexander	Cochran	Hatch
Allard	Coleman	Hutchison
Barrasso	Collins	Inhofe
Baucus	Conrad	Inouye
Bayh	Corker	Isakson
Bennett	Cornyn	Kennedy
Bingaman	Craig	Kerry
Bond	Crapo	Klobuchar
Boxer	DeMint	Kohl
Brown	Dole	Kyl
Brownback	Domenici	Landrieu
Bunning	Dorgan	Lautenberg
Burr	Durbin	Levin
Byrd	Ensign	Lieberman
Cantwell	Enzi	Lincoln
Cardin	Feingold	Lott
Carper	Graham	Lugar
Casey	Grassley	Martinez
Chambliss	Gregg	McCain
Clinton	Hagel	McCaskill

McConnell	Reid	Specter
Menendez	Roberts	Stabenow
Mikulski	Rockefeller	Stevens
Murkowski	Salazar	Sununu
Murray	Schumer	Thune
Nelson (FL)	Sessions	Voinovich
Nelson (NE)	Shelby	Warner
Pryor	Smith	Whitehouse
Reed	Snowe	Wyden

NAYS—5

Feinstein	Sanders	Webb
Leahy	Tester	

NOT VOTING—5

Biden	Johnson	Vitter
Dodd	Obama	

The amendment (No. 2024), as modified, was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan is recognized.

Mr. LEVIN. Madam President, the next order of business we agreed upon will be to dispose of the wounded warrior legislation. There are three pending amendments which have now all been cleared. They need to be prepared and accepted. It may take us 20 minutes or so. Then there will be a vote.

Mr. MCCAIN. Madam President, if I can tell my friend, I think it will only take us about 2 minutes since we are in agreement, and then we can move to wounded warriors, for the benefit of our colleagues.

Mr. LEVIN. Five minutes before a vote can begin, that will be fine. The sooner the better. We are all happy with that schedule. Is Senator DORGAN on the floor?

Mr. LEAHY. Will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. LEVIN. I will be happy to yield. I will be happy to yield in a minute to the Senator from Vermont. The next business, if it is agreeable with the ranking member, will be to dispose of the Dorgan amendment, at which point we are going to Levin-Reed. Is my understanding correct?

Mr. STEVENS. What is the Dorgan amendment?

Mr. LEVIN. The Dorgan amendment is an al-Qaida amendment. We are trying to work out a UC that involves a series of amendments around Levin-Reed, including the Cornyn amendment.

Mr. MCCAIN. If the Senator will yield for a question.

Mr. LEVIN. I will be happy to yield.

Mr. MCCAIN. It is our intention to set it up so there is at least a side by side offered by Senator CORNYN, and there may be additional side by sides, if necessary. Is that our basic agreement?

Mr. LEVIN. Assuming cloture is invoked and we get to a vote on Levin-Reed, at that point there will be a side by side in this UC with the Cornyn amendment, but we have to leave open the possibility, then, of a side by side for an amendment with Cornyn.

Now I will be happy to yield to the Senator from Vermont.

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, I wonder if the Senator will just give me 4 minutes. Vermont has lost per capita more men and women in Iraq and Afghanistan than any other State. One is being interred tomorrow. I wonder if I may have 4 minutes to speak about that person in morning business because the family will be here tomorrow for interment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, reserving the right to object, the distinguished bill managers and I have been talking about a procedure whereby I was under the understanding that I would be allowed to lay down my amendment. It would be then set aside, and then later there would be an attempt to structure a side by side with the Reed-Levin amendment and the Cornyn amendment perhaps for next week, but it will have to be done by unanimous consent.

Mr. LEVIN. If the Senator will yield, the staff is preparing a UC which covers the entire subject. It is too complex for us to say something and get into more trouble. Let's just get the UC.

Mr. MCCAIN. If I may respond, it is the intention to make sure there would be a side by side if the procedure, if it comes up——

Mr. LEVIN. If we get to a vote on Levin-Reed, it is our intention, and it will be implemented in a UC, that Senator CORNYN's amendment, which he wanted to be voted on side by side, would be voted on side by side, but we then need to have the opportunity to have a side by side with the Cornyn amendment. I am just cautioning everybody, because we have already had enough confusion on this subject, that we should wait for the staff to prepare that UC so everybody is satisfied.

Mr. CORNYN. Will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. LEVIN. I will be happy to yield.

Mr. CORNYN. My question, Madam President, is, my understanding is the Cornyn amendment would be laid down this evening perhaps, then set aside while we work on the UC that the distinguished chairman referred to and perhaps set it up for a vote next week. Is that correct?

Mr. LEVIN. My understanding is the current procedure, where we are, we alternate amendments. So the Senator from Arizona, the ranking member, can designate anybody he wishes on his side to offer an amendment. But in terms of laying aside what comes up, when it is voted on, and side by sides, that part has to be resolved by a UC.

Mr. CORNYN. If I may ask one more question, Madam President, is it the Senator's intention that following the disposition of the wounded warriors amendment that it would be in order for the distinguished ranking member on our side to lay down the Cornyn amendment?

Mr. LEVIN. We are going to try to dispose of the Dorgan amendment immediately afterward. But the next time the Senator from Arizona can designate a Member on his side, it is his intention to have the Senator from Texas recognized.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. MCCAIN. Madam President, before the Senator from Vermont speaks, I assure the Senator from Texas that there is no intention of depriving him of a side by side; that the intention is to frame the UC such that there is a side by side, but there is a little parliamentary side of it. I hate to take the time of all of our colleagues, but that is the intent and the agreement between the two of us to get it done. I will have the next amendment after the Dorgan amendment, and I will recognize him at that time. Then we will work out the modalities.

Mr. CORNYN. I thank the distinguished Senator.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, in that regard, while the two managers are on the Senate floor, on Tuesday, the distinguished senior Senator from Pennsylvania, Mr. SPECTER, and I came to the floor to offer our amendment—at least to get it filed—on habeas corpus, which has been joined by many Senators on both sides of the aisle. That was objected to.

I am just wondering: We have been trying every day since. Can the managers give me some idea of when Senator SPECTER and I may begin the debate on that amendment?

Mr. MCCAIN. Madam President, may I say this is one time I am glad I am not in the majority.

Mr. LEVIN. I am trying to figure out how to respond to Senator MCCAIN. I am not sure I have a good response.

Mr. LEAHY. The amendment is filed.

Mr. LEVIN. We are going to move to the Iraq legislation immediately after the disposition of the Dorgan amendment, subject to the Cornyn amendment, which will be next which is being figured out in a UC. We are then going to go to the Iraq legislation, the Levin-Reed legislation, so I cannot tell the Senator from Vermont how long the debate on that legislation is going to last. There are many people who wish to be recognized thereafter, and I cannot at this time tell him which one from our side will be the one to be selected. I don't want to make that choice now.

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, I understand the response of the distinguished senior Senator from Michigan, but I wonder if he might give some indication to this Senator whether he believes that at some time an effort can be made to bring forward—the amendment has been filed. I was erroneous. It has been filed. But assuming it is germane, some time the amendment, Specter-Leahy, et al, amendment will be brought forth.

Mr. LEVIN. It is certainly my intention that Senators have that opportunity. The Senator from California has asked, a number of other Senators have asked, and it is my hope and intent that Senators will have an opportunity to offer amendments.

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, I would renew my unanimous consent request. Back to where I started.

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

VERMONT FALLEN

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, this week, the Senate is engaged again in an intense debate about one of the most pivotal issues facing our Nation and its families right now—the ongoing war in Iraq. There is great division in the country and in the Congress on many of these issues, but I believe there is one area where we remain united, and that is in support and appreciation of our troops and their families and friends here at home.

The Nation shares the sorrow and grief over the loss of so many fine Americans in war. Our military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan have come at the cost of precious American lives. No one knows that pain more than those loved ones left behind—the spouses, the parents, the sons, and the daughters who are left to pick up the pieces. A gaping hole of unimaginable proportions opens with each and every one of these family losses.

Families in Vermont have gone through more than their share of the pain. Vermont has suffered the highest per capita casualty rate of any State in the Nation during these ongoing operations. We are a State of just over 600,000 people, and many of our State's sons and daughters are part of the Vermont National Guard, the Reserves, and the Active-Duty Forces. Twenty-six servicemembers with Vermont ties have given their lives in Iraq and Afghanistan. Behind the names of those Vermonters are dozens of families and hundreds of friends facing that all-too-real and perhaps unknowable loss. When I go to these funerals and I look around in the church or the synagogue where the funeral is being held, I see so many people I have known from childhood days and realize they, too, are members of the family of those who have died.

Earlier this year, dedicated students at Vermont's Norwich University produced a documentary about these families coping with the loss of their loved ones. Titled ''Vermont Fallen,'' the film documents how many of these family members have reacted, how they have tried to cope. In the darkest and saddest of times, this project has helped a new Vermont family to emerge, brought together by community screenings of the film. They have been able since then to turn to each other for comfort.

The Norwich students' project has offered a glimpse into the searing and highly personal grief and mourning that has touched thousands of American families and scores of American communities across Vermont and across the country. They have produced a tribute that speaks directly to each human heart.

Tomorrow, at Arlington National Cemetery, one of our fallen, 1LT Mark Dooley, will be interred. Lieutenant Dooley selflessly died in the line of duty in Iraq in 2005. He was a member of the police department in Wilmington, VT, a lovely town that is nestled right in southern Vermont, almost on a midline with the Green Mountains. My wife Marcelle and I went to the police station after his death just to sign the condolences and to announce our condolences. Lieutenant Dooley's parents will also be there, as well as other members of his family, and in a sense, every Vermonter will be there.

Joining the Dooleys, lending their unique understanding of the special bond that comes from it, will be the families of the ''Vermont Fallen.'' I hope the Dooleys and what has now become their extended family will find comfort in one another. They deserve to be in the thoughts, the hearts, and prayers of all Vermonters and every American as they gather at Arlington. They are in the thoughts and prayers of the Members of the Senate.

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD a list of the ''Vermont Fallen.''

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

VERMONT CASUALTIES IN IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN

Twenty-four American servicemen with ties to Vermont have died in Iraq since the war began. One Vermonter has been killed in Afghanistan. A 26th Vermonter died of natural causes in Kuwait while training to go to Iraq:

2007

Marine Cpl. Christopher Degiovine, 25, who graduated from Essex Junction High School in 2000 and Champlain College in 2005, was killed in Anbar Province, Iraq, on April 26.

2006

U.S. Army Sgt. Carlton A. Clark, 22, of Sharon, was killed Aug. 6 when an improvised bomb detonated next to the vehicle in which he was riding in Baghdad.

Marine Lance Cpl. Kurt Dechen, 24, of Springfield was killed Aug. 3 during fighting in Iraq's Anbar Province.

Vermont National Guard Sgt. 1st Class John Thomas Stone of Tunbridge was killed March 29 in southern Afghanistan, when the forward operating base he was in was attacked.

Vermont National Guard Spc. Christopher Merchant of Hardwick was killed March 1 in a coordinated attack on Iraqi police headquarters in Iraq, roughly three miles northwest of Ramadi.

Vermont National Guard Sgt. Joshua Allen Johnson, 24, from Richford, where he lived with his grandparents, was killed Jan. 25 in Ramadi. Johnson was born in St. Albans.

2005

Army National Guard 2nd Lt. Mark Procopio of Burlington was killed Nov. 2 by a homemade bomb while on patrol. Procopio and his patrol were responding to a downed Marine helicopter in Ramadi.

Army National Guard Spc. Scott P. McLaughlin of Hardwick was killed Sept. 22 after a sniper's bullet pierced the seams of his body armor near Ramadi.

Army National Guard 1st Lt. Mark H. Dooley, was killed Sept. 19 when the Humvee he was riding in was destroyed by a roadside bomb in Ramadi.

Army National Guard Sgt. 1st Class Chris S. Chapin, 39, of Proctor, was killed by small arms fire Aug. 23 while performing a civil affairs mission near Ramadi.

Army Sgt. 1st Class Michael Benson, a Minnesota native, who married a woman from Colchester, was wounded by a roadside bomb in Iraq on Aug. 2. He later died in a military hospital in Washington. He was buried in Belvidere.

Marine Sgt. Jesse Strong, 24, of Albany, was one of four Marines killed Jan. 26 during an ambush in Iraq's Anbar Province.

2004

Marine Lance Cpl. Jeffery S. Holmes, 20, of Hartford, was killed on Thanksgiving Day while conducting house-clearing operations in Fallujah.

Army Staff Sgt. Michael Voss, 35, of Carthage, N.C., was killed Oct. 8 when a roadside bomb exploded in a convoy he was leading back to base near Kirkuk. He was a native of Enosburg;

Marine Lt. Col. David Greene, 39, of Shelburne died July 29 when the helicopter he was piloting was hit by ground fire in Anbar Province.

Army National Guard Sgt. Jamie Gray, 29, of East Montpelier died June 7 when a bomb exploded south of Baghdad.

Army National Guard Sgt. Kevin Sheehan, 36, of Milton died May 25 in the same attack that killed Alan Bean Jr.

Army National Guard Spc. Alan Bean Jr., 22, of Bridport died May 25 during a mortar attack about 25 miles south of Baghdad.

Maine Army National Guard Spc. Christopher D. Gelineau, 23, who graduated from Mount Abraham Union High School in Bristol, died April 20 after the convoy he was in was ambushed in Mosul.

Army National Guard Sgt. William Normandy, 42, of East Barre, died March 15 of natural causes while training in the Kuwait desert.

Army Spc. Solomon C. Bangayan, 24, of Jay, died Jan. 15 after his convoy was ambushed in Baghdad.

2003

Army Capt. Pierre Piche, 29, of Starksboro, died Nov. 15 when the helicopter he was in went down in Mosul.

Army Pvt. Kyle Gilbert, 20, of Brattleboro was killed Aug. 6 in fighting in Baghdad.

Army Sgt. Justin Garvey, 23, who graduated from Proctor High School, was killed July 20 when the convoy he was in was attacked near Tal Afar.

Army Chief Warrant Officer Erik A. Halvorsen, 40, of Bennington died April 2 when the helicopter he was in crashed near Karbala.

Marine Cpl. Mark Evnin, 21, South Burlington, died April 3 after a firefight near Kut.

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona is recognized.

Mr. MCCAIN. Madam President, I know the chairman is on his way here, and while he is on his way, I would just like to urge all Senators who have amendments to this bill to please get them in. We have approximately 100 pending. Obviously, most of those can be dispensed with without debate and votes, but we really need to stop submitting amendments because there has to be a time where we just have had enough amendments approved. So I would urge my colleagues to get their amendments in tonight—before tomorrow, if they can, but tomorrow at the latest—so that next week we can begin the process of approving or deciding to debate and to vote on various amendments.

Madam President, I note the presence of the distinguished chairman, so I yield the floor.

Mr. LEVIN. Madam President, I join my good friend from Arizona first of all in urging people to get their amendments in to us. I don't know the time that was suggested by the Senator, but I want to repeat it—what was it? Well, the earlier the better because we have a lot on our plate.

Madam President, these are the three second-degree amendments—we referred to them before—and as soon as these amendments are disposed of, we are then going to move to vote on the wounded warriors legislation, and I believe we should have a rollcall on that legislation.

AMENDMENT NO. 2132 TO AMENDMENT NO. 2011

(Purpose: To provide and enhance rehabilitative treatment and services to veterans with traumatic brain injury and to improve health care and benefits programs for veterans)

Mr. LEVIN. Madam President, on behalf of Senators Akaka, Craig, Rockefeller, Murray, Brown, Mikulski, and Obama, I call up amendment No. 2132, an amendment to provide and enhance rehabilitative treatment and services to veterans with traumatic brain injury and to improve health care and benefits programs for veterans.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Michigan [Mr. LEVIN], for Mr. AKAKA, for himself and Mr. CRAIG, Mr. ROCKEFELLER, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. BROWN, Ms. MIKULSKI, and Mr. OBAMA, proposes amendment numbered 2132 to amendment No. 2011.

Mr. MCCAIN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is printed in today's RECORD under ''Text of Amendments.'')

The PRESIDING OFFICER. If there is no further debate, without objection, the amendment is agreed to.

The amendment (No. 2132) was agreed to.

Mr. LEVIN. Madam President, I move to reconsider.

Mr. MCCAIN. I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 2160, AS MODIFIED, TO AMENDMENT NO. 2019

Mr. LEVIN. Madam President, on behalf of Senators NELSON of Nebraska and GRAHAM, I call up amendment No. 2160, a second-degree amendment to our pending amendment; and on behalf of Senators NELSON and GRAHAM, I send a modification to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Michigan [Mr. LEVIN], for Mr. NELSON of Nebraska, for himself and Mr. GRAHAM, proposes amendment numbered 2160, as modified.

Mr. MCCAIN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment, as modified, is as follows:

(Purpose: To provide extended benefits under the TRICARE program for the primary caregivers of members of the uniformed services who incur a serious injury or illness on active duty)

On page 34 after line 5, of the amendment insert the following:

SEC. 1627. EXTENDED BENEFITS UNDER TRICARE FOR PRIMARY CAREGIVERS OF MEMBERS OF THE UNIFORMED SERVICES WHO INCUR A SERIOUS INJURY OR ILLNESS ON ACTIVE DUTY.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 1079(d) of title 10, United States Code, is amended—

(1) by redesignating paragraphs (2) and (3) as paragraphs (3) and (4), respectively; and

(2) by inserting after paragraph (1) the following new paragraph (2):

''(2)(A) Subject to such terms, conditions, and exceptions as the Secretary of Defense considers appropriate, the program of extended benefits for eligible dependents under this subsection shall include extended benefits for the primary caregivers of members of the uniformed services who incur a serious injury or illness on active duty.

''(B) The Secretary of Defense shall prescribe in regulations the individuals who shall be treated as the primary caregivers of a member of the uniformed services for purposes of this paragraph.

''(C) For purposes of this section, a serious injury or illness, with respect to a member of the uniformed services, is an injury or illness that may render the member medically unfit to perform the duties of the member's office, grade, rank, or rating,'' and that renders a member of the uniformed services dependent upon a caregiver.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by subsection (a) shall take effect on January 1, 2008.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. If there is no further debate, without objection, the amendment is agreed to.

Amendment (No. 2160), as modified, was agreed to.

Mr. LEVIN. Madam President, I move to reconsider.

Mr. MCCAIN. I move to lay that motion on the table. The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 2159, AS MODIFIED, TO AMENDMENT NO. 2019

Mr. LEVIN. Madam President, on behalf of Senators NELSON of Nebraska and GRAHAM, I call up amendment No. 2159, a second-degree amendment to the pending amendment regarding travel reimbursement for specialty care; and on behalf of Senators NELSON and GRAHAM, I send a modification to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Michigan [Mr. LEVIN], for Mr. NELSON of Nebraska, for himself and Mr. GRAHAM, proposes amendment numbered 2159, as modified, to amendment No. 2160.

Mr. MCCAIN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment, as modified, is as follows:

On page 31, after line 14 of the amendment insert the following:

SEC. 1622. REIMBURSEMENT OF CERTAIN FORMER MEMBERS OF THE UNIFORMED SERVICES WITH SERVICE-CONNECTED DISABILITIES FOR TRAVEL FOR FOLLOW-ON SPECIALTY CARE AND RELATED SERVICES.

(a) TRAVEL.—Section 1074i of title 10, United States Code, is amended—

(1) by redesignating subsection (b) as subsection (c); and

(2) by inserting after subsection (a) the following new subsection (b):

''(b) FOLLOW-ON SPECIALTY CARE AND RELATED SERVICES.—In any case in which a former member of a uniformed service who incurred a disability while on active duty in a combat zone or during performance of duty in combat related operations (as designated by the Secretary of Defense), and is entitled to retired or retainer pay, or equivalent pay, requires follow-on specialty care, services, or supplies related to such disability at a specific military treatment facility more than 100 miles from the location in which the former member resides, the Secretary shall provide reimbursement for *reasonable travel expenses* comparable to those provided under subsection (a) for the former member, and when accompaniment by an adult is determined by competent medical authority to be necessary, for a spouse, parent, or guardian of the former member, or another member of the former member's family who is at least 21 years of age.''.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by subsection (a) shall take effect January 1, 2008, and shall apply with respect to travel that occurs on or after that date.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. If there is no further debate on the amendment, without objection, the amendment is agreed to.

The amendment (No. 2159), as modified, was agreed to.

Mr. LEVIN. Madam President, I move to reconsider.

Mr. MCCAIN. I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

Mr. LEVIN. Madam President, I believe we have now disposed of all the known amendments to the wounded warrior legislation, and I know that I am speaking on behalf of all of us, at least 50 cosponsors, that a lot of work was put in by a lot of Senators on this legislation. Both committees, Veterans' Affairs and Armed Services, have worked together, so thanks to all of the Senators for all of the work that has gone into this. In all the bills that have been filed, ideas have been taken from so many of those bills, and those Senators are a part of this legislation, so I hope we can now promptly, and even unanimously, in a very bipartisan way, adopt this legislation.

Mr. MCCAIN. Madam President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There is a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Delaware (Mr. BIDEN), the Senator from Connecticut (Mr.

DODD), the Senator from Hawaii (Mr. INOUYE), the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. JOHNSON), and the Senator from Illinois (Mr. OBAMA) are necessarily absent.

I further announce that, if present and voting, the Senator from Hawaii (Mr. INOUYE) would vote ''yea.''

Mr. LOTT. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. VITTER).

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. WHITEHOUSE). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 94, nays 0, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 246 Leg.]

YEAS—94

Akaka	Domenici	McConnell
Alexander	Dorgan	Menendez
Allard	Durbin	Mikulski
Barrasso	Ensign	Murkowski
Baucus	Enzi	Murray
Bayh	Feingold	Nelson (FL)
Bennett	Feinstein	Nelson (NE)
Bingaman	Graham	Pryor
Bond	Grassley	Reed
Boxer	Gregg	Reid
Brown	Hagel	Roberts
Brownback	Harkin	Rockefeller
Bunning	Hatch	Salazar
Burr	Hutchison	Sanders
Byrd	Inhofe	Schumer
Cantwell	Isakson	Sessions
Cardin	Kennedy	Shelby
Carper	Kerry	Smith
Casey	Klobuchar	Snowe
Chambliss	Kohl	Specter
Clinton	Kyl	Stabenow
Coburn	Landrieu	Stevens
Cochran	Lautenberg	Sununu
Coleman	Leahy	Tester
Collins	Levin	Thune
Conrad	Lieberman	Voinovich
Corker	Lincoln	Warner
Cornyn	Lott	Webb
Craig	Lugar	Whitehouse
Crapo	Martinez	Wyden
DeMint	McCain	
Dole	McCaskill	

NOT VOTING—6

Biden	Inouye	Obama
Dodd	Johnson	Vitter

The amendment (No. 2019) was agreed to.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, I move to reconsider the vote, and lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Senator CORNYN now be recognized to call up amendment No. 2100; that after his statement of 20 minutes, his amendment be laid aside; that Senator DORGAN then be recognized to offer his amendment No. 2135.

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

AMENDMENT NO. 2100 TO AMENDMENT NO. 2011

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to set aside the pending amendment and call up amendment 2100 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the amendment.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Texas [Mr. CORNYN] proposes an amendment numbered 2100 to amendment No. 2011.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To express the sense of the Senate that it is in the national security interest of the United States that Iraq not become a failed state and a safe haven for terrorists)

At the end of title XV, insert the following:

SEC. 1535. SENSE OF THE SENATE ON THE CONSEQUENCES OF A FAILED STATE IN IRAQ.

(a) FINDINGS.—The Senate makes the following findings:

(1) A failed state in Iraq would become a safe haven for Islamic radicals, including al Qaeda and Hezbollah, who are determined to attack the United States and United States allies.

(2) The Iraq Study Group report found that ''[a] chaotic Iraq could provide a still stronger base of operations for terrorists who seek to act regionally or even globally''.

(3) The Iraq Study Group noted that ''Al Qaeda will portray any failure by the United States in Iraq as a significant victory that will be featured prominently as they recruit for their cause in the region and around the world''.

(4) A National Intelligence Estimate concluded that the consequences of a premature withdrawal from Iraq would be that—

(A) Al Qaeda would attempt to use Anbar province to plan further attacks outside of Iraq;

(B) neighboring countries would consider actively intervening in Iraq; and

(C) sectarian violence would significantly increase in Iraq, accompanied by massive civilian casualties and displacement.

(5) The Iraq Study Group found that ''a premature American departure from Iraq would almost certainly produce greater sectarian violence and further deterioration of conditions. . . . The near-term results would be a significant power vacuum, greater human suffering, regional destabilization, and a threat to the global economy. Al Qaeda would depict our withdrawal as a historic victory.''

(6) A failed state in Iraq could lead to broader regional conflict, possibly involving Syria, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey.

(7) The Iraq Study group noted that ''Turkey could send troops into northern Iraq to prevent Kurdistan from declaring independence''.

(8) The Iraq Study Group noted that ''Iran could send troops to restore stability in southern Iraq and perhaps gain control of oil fields. The regional influence of Iran could rise at a time when that country is on a path to producing nuclear weapons.''

(9) A failed state in Iraq would lead to massive humanitarian suffering, including widespread ethnic cleansing and countless refugees and internally displaced persons, many of whom will be tortured and killed for having assisted Coalition forces.

(10) A recent editorial in the New York Times stated, ''Americans must be clear that Iraq, and the region around it, could be even bloodier and more chaotic after Americans leave. There could be reprisals against those who worked with American forces, further ethnic cleansing, even genocide. Potentially destabilizing refugee flows could hit Jordan and Syria. Iran and Turkey could be tempted to make power grabs.''

(11) The Iraq Study Group found that ''[i]f we leave and Iraq descends into chaos, the long-range consequences could eventually require the United States to return''.

(b) SENSE OF THE SENATE.—It is the sense of the Senate that—

(1) the Senate should commit itself to a strategy that will not leave a failed state in Iraq; and

(2) the Senate should not pass legislation that will undermine our military's ability to prevent a failed state in Iraq.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, as we debate the so-called new strategy in Iraq, and as we once again engage in more than a little political posturing that has become so redundant, that has already delayed important legislation, not the least of which was the emergency appropriations bill to get proper funding and equipment to our troops, it appears once again that some of my colleagues in the Senate feel we should retreat, thus abandoning what al-Qaida views as the central front in their global war of terror, and in so doing, allowing Iraq to become a safe haven for al-Qaida, the same terrorist organization that hit this country on September 11, 2001.

I ask my colleagues who want us to abandon this critical fight now, if we leave Iraq before the Iraqis can defend and govern themselves, then will they answer this question: Will that action strengthen or weaken al-Qaida and other foreign jihadists in Iraq and across the region? If there is one thing all of us should have learned by now, it is that al-Qaida and organizations that emulate it are the face of evil. These organizations and the individuals who subscribe to their ideology are dedicated to the destruction of the United States, to the destruction of Israel, and to committing the most barbaric and incomprehensible assaults on innocent civilians that any of us can possibly imagine.

Without a stable government in Iraq, it becomes increasingly likely that the training and equipping of terrorists and the planning and execution of terror operations can proceed in both Iraq and throughout the region with impunity, and that our adversaries will operate with little fear of discovery or disruption.

I also ask my distinguished colleagues who believe that we ought to leave Iraq before it is stable: Will al-Qaida and other terrorists then follow us here into the United States, even while expanding their influence in the Middle East, Europe, Asia, and Africa? We have already seen numerous attacks occur throughout Europe and Africa from al-Qaida-linked or al-Qaida-inspired terrorists. With a firm foothold in Iraq, al-Qaida would have a safe and unthreatened sanctuary to serve as their new base of operations from which they can expand further into the Middle East or Africa or Europe, spreading chaos, fear, and strife.

How long would it be before al-Qaida is able to continue unabated with further attacks against the United States including operations into and within our country?

I ask my distinguished colleagues who believe we should retreat and surrender before stabilizing Iraq, before

providing them the opportunity to govern and defend themselves: How will we address Iran's continued support of Iraqi insurgents and terrorists now that we have definitive evidence of their involvement in activities such as the training of terrorists and Shiite militias in Iran; operations in Iraq by terrorists trained in Iran by Al-Quds and other Iranian special military forces; alliances with Hezbollah and other groups, including Iranian-trained and equipped Hezbollah fighters operating in Iraq; the provision of the explosive formed penetrator and other improvised explosive devices that are killing American soldiers, sailors, marines, and airmen; and other aid and assistance directly resulting in the death of American citizens serving us bravely in Iraq?

We must be especially concerned as Iran spreads its power and influence in the region, considering their insistence on developing nuclear capabilities. I ask my colleagues who subscribe to this proposed policy of retreat and surrender: What will Iran do to expand their influence in Iraq through their Shia alliances if we stage an immediate withdrawal?

We have seen the impact of Iranian-supported terrorist activity in Iraq. Not only have we lost hundreds of American servicemembers due to Iranian involvement, not to mention those who still live but live with grievous injuries, but scores of Iraqis have died too, including innocent civilians who have been the victims of these savage attacks.

I ask my colleagues who believe we ought to retreat and surrender regardless of the circumstances on the ground, regardless of the ability of the Iraqis to govern and defend themselves: Will Sunni majority nations outside of Iraq, including Saudis and others, stand by and let Shiites massacre Sunnis in Iraq? Conversely, will Iran, Hezbollah, and others stand by when Sunnis then massacre Shiias in retaliation? It is clear that this situation could rapidly deteriorate into a full-scale civil war, a massive religious conflict or, at worst, uncontrolled genocide on both sides.

I ask my distinguished colleagues who believe we ought to withdraw from Iraq before that country is able to defend and govern itself: What is the resultant impact with the Kurds in northern Iraq and with Turkey if we stage an immediate withdrawal?

Cross-border incursions by both PKK elements operating from Kurdish safe havens in northern Iraq, and retaliatory attacks by Turkish forces could become routine, further destabilizing Iraq, Turkey, and the region.

I ask my distinguished colleagues who believe we ought to withdraw from Iraq before that country is able to govern and defend itself: What will happen to our Iraqi allies who have fought alongside of us? How will this affect America's ability to conduct future multinational operations?

Some have argued we should have shaped and relied upon a stronger coalition before undertaking operations in Iraq. Clearly we lose the ability to build such a coalition in the future if we leave our allies behind as we precipitously withdraw from Iraq.

I ask my distinguished colleagues who believe we ought to withdraw from Iraq before that country is able to govern and defend itself: What is the scope of humanitarian and refugee crisis that will ensue if we suddenly depart from Iraq? Where and how will the United States address that consequent crisis? It was not that long ago we experienced the largest scale humanitarian and refugee flow after the first gulf war. We were able to eventually deal with that situation through a substantial commitment of forces to Joint Task Force Provide Comfort in northern Iraq. Under this new scenario, it would be difficult if not impossible for us to adequately help the large segments of the Iraqi population trying to flee from unrelenting terror when our forces suddenly withdraw.

I ask our colleagues who believe we ought to withdraw from Iraq before the Iraqis are able to govern and defend themselves: Are the Iraqis ready to assume full responsibility and control of their own security, economic development, reconstruction, and governance? If not, how can we posture the Iraqis for that desired end state, while at the same time withdrawing under continued enemy pressure?

Finally, I ask my colleagues on the other side this important question: What is your plan? What is your plan for the way forward in Iraq and in the region?

Our presence in Iraq is not about pride. It is not, as some have suggested, solely to benefit the Iraqis. Instead it is about our own vital national security and our ability to address the threats to our Nation. Our success is not just about providing the people of Iraq a safe environment to develop and provide for their own self-governance, it is about America's national security, the stability of the Middle East, and our partners in the war on terror.

We have to do what is right for America's national security, which means helping to stabilize the Middle East and supporting our partners in the war on terror. These 10 concerns have caused me to draft an amendment which I believe must be added to this bill. This amendment expresses the sense of Congress that ''the Senate should commit itself to a strategy that will not leave a failed state in Iraq.'' It also states that ''the Senate should not pass legislation that will undermine our military's ability to prevent a failed state in Iraq.''

The Iraq Study Group, National Intelligence Estimates, and even the New York Times have all repeatedly warned against the consequences of a failed state in Iraq. Instability in the region could lead to genocide, retaliatory attacks against our allies, invasions from neighboring countries, and the proliferation of global terrorism. We cannot allow these possibilities to become realities. Withdrawing our troops now or on the expedited basis proposed by Senators REED and LEVIN, when Iraq is not yet able to sustain itself, will only sink the fledgling nation into further chaos and disorder while ensuring that either we will recommit our troops later to a more tumultuous and dangerous battle or that we will leave ourselves open to future attacks from a fortified terrorist network.

I urge all my colleagues to reject any notion of a premature troop withdrawal and join me in expressing the importance of a stable Iraqi nation, not just for the benefit of the people of Iraq but for our own national security. We can't talk about ideas such as withdrawing our troops without looking at the consequences. I know all of us join in believing that we want to get our troops home as soon as we can. The only difference between us is those who believe we ought to do so based on an arbitrary timetable and those who believe we ought to do so after we are able to leave the Iraqis in a position to govern and defend themselves, not just, again, for their security and safety but for ours as well. Because a failed state in Iraq is a clear and present danger to the American people. It would be terrible, indeed, if, having let that happen and seeing more Americans die as they did on 9/11 as a result of al-Qaida's strength and its ability to recruit, train, and then export terrorist attacks to the United States and around the world, that more people in this country and other countries around the world had to die. That is at stake.

If we are going to talk about ideas such as those proposed in the Reed-Levin and other amendments, we need to confront directly the consequences of our actions. This amendment expresses the sense of the Senate that we will take no action that will make it more likely that Iraq will end up a failed state, again, in the national security interest of the United States.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

AMENDMENT NO. 2135 TO AMENDMENT NO. 2011

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I have an amendment at the desk, No. 2135, and I ask for its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from North Dakota [Mr. DORGAN], for himself and Mr. CONRAD, proposes an amendment numbered 2135.

Mr. DORGAN. I ask unanimous consent that reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: Relating to bringing Osama bin Laden and other leaders of al Qaeda to justice)

At the end of subtitle B of title XII, add the following:

SEC. 1218. JUSTICE FOR OSAMA BIN LADEN AND OTHER LEADERS OF AL QAEDA.

(a) ENHANCED REWARD FOR CAPTURE OF OSAMA BIN LADEN.—Section 36(e)(1) of the State Department Basic Authorities Act of 1956 (22 U.S.C. 2708e)(1)) is amended by adding at the end the following new sentence: ''The Secretary shall authorize a reward of $50,000,000 for the capture, or information leading to the capture, of Osama bin Laden.''.

(b) STATUS OF EFFORTS TO BRING OSAMA BIN LADEN AND OTHER LEADERS OF AL QAEDA TO JUSTICE.—

(1) REPORTS REQUIRED.—Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, and every 90 days thereafter, the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Defense shall, in coordination with the Director of National Intelligence, jointly submit to Congress a report on the progress made in bringing Osama bin Laden and other leaders of al Qaeda to justice.

(2) ELEMENTS.—Each report under paragraph (1) shall include, current as of the date of such report, the following:

(A) An assessment of the likely current location of terrorist leaders, including Osama bin Laden, Ayman al-Zawahiri, and other key leaders of al Qaeda.

(B) A description of ongoing efforts to bring to justice such terrorist leaders, particularly those who have been directly implicated in attacks in the United States and its embassies.

(C) An assessment of whether the government of each country assessed as a likely location of top leaders of al Qaeda has fully cooperated in efforts to bring those leaders to justice.

(D) A description of diplomatic efforts currently being made to improve the cooperation of the governments described in subparagraph (C).

(E) A description of the current status of the top leadership of al Qaeda and the strategy for locating them and bringing them to justice.

(F) An assessment of whether al Qaeda remains the terrorist organization that poses the greatest threat to United States interests, including the greatest threat to the territorial United States.

(3) FORM OF REPORT.—Each report submitted to Congress under paragraph (1) shall be submitted in a classified form, and shall be accompanied by a report in unclassified form that redacts the classified information in the report.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I offer this amendment on behalf of myself, my colleague Senator CONRAD, and my colleague Senator SALAZAR. My understanding is we will vote on this amendment in the morning. I don't know whether there has been a unanimous consent order on that matter, but my understanding is it will be voted on at 9:30. I wanted to spend a few minutes talking about what this amendment is. Let me begin by pointing out the following.

It has been nearly 6 years since Osama bin Laden and the leadership of al-Qaida ordered an attack on our country on 9/11/2001. Thousands of Americans were killed, innocent Americans murdered by Osama bin Laden and the leadership of al-Qaida. Nineteen terrorists with box cutters using commercial airliners loaded with fuel attacked this country. Thousands died. Six years later, Osama bin Laden is still free. He has not been brought to justice. Six years later, we are told in reports by senior officials in the newspapers—and I will read some of them—that al-Qaida is stronger than it has been in years. Six years later, we are told that al-Qaida and the Taliban are rebuilding terrorist training camps in northern Pakistan and the region between northern Pakistan and Afghanistan. Six years later, we are told that the leadership of al-Qaida has a secure hideout in Pakistan. Six years later, we are told that al-Qaida, with its leadership, remains the greatest terrorist threat to our country. All of this after 6 years, two wars in two countries, hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of billions of dollars spent at home and abroad, thousands of American soldiers dead, and tens of thousands wounded.

That is a failure. The fact that those who attacked us on 9/11 have not been brought to justice and, in fact, are now planning additional attacks against this country and other countries and doing so in secure and safe harbors in northern Pakistan, the fact that that exists is a failure. We have troops going door to door in Baghdad in the middle of a civil war. Yet the leadership of al-Qaida, the greatest terrorist threat to this country, is apparently living free in a safe harbor in northern Pakistan.

Let me describe some of the reasons I bring this discussion to the floor. This is testimony by John Negroponte, then-Director of National Intelligence on January 11, 2007, before the U.S. Senate Select Committee on Intelligence:

> Al Qaeda continues to plot attacks against our homeland and other targets with the objective of inflicting mass casualties. And they continue to maintain active connections and relationships that radiate outward from their leaders' secure hideout in Pakistan.

Think of that, 6 years after 9/11, after they engineered the murder of innocent Americans, our Director of National Intelligence says the leadership of al-Qaida ''continues to plot attacks against our homeland'' from their ''secure hideout in Pakistan.''

Further, the Director of National Intelligence, in the same testimony said this:

> Al Qaeda is the terrorist organization that poses the greatest threat to U.S. interests, including to the homeland.

That is from the Director of National Intelligence. Al-Qaida is the greatest terrorist threat to our country. He said that in January of this year.

Let me fast forward. The McClatchy newspapers, June 26, 2007. Senior U.S. intelligence and law enforcement officials in this administration said:

> While the U.S. presses its war against insurgents linked to al Qaida in Iraq, Osama bin Laden's group is recruiting, regrouping and rebuilding in a new sanctuary on the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan.
>
> Al Qaida, its allies in Afghanistan's Taliban movement and Pakistani radicals ''have free rein there now,'' said Marvin Wenibaum, a former State Department intelligence analyst.

That is last month.

July 11, ''Officials Worry of Summer Terrorist Attack.''

> . . . Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff told the editorial board of the Chicago Tribune that he had a ''gut feeling'' about a new period of increased risk.

The next day, July 12:

> Six years after the Bush administration declared war on al-Qaeda, the terrorist network is gaining strength and has established a safe haven in remote tribal areas of western Pakistan for training and planning attacks.
>
> The report, a five-page threat assessment compiled by the National Counterterrorism Center, is titled ''Al-Qaida Better Positioned To Strike the West.''

We have seen some of this before. Mr. Chertoff says he has a gut feeling. The fact is, we have a lot of intelligence-gathering capability. Mr. Chertoff, Director of Homeland Security, has a gut feeling.

Let's go back 6 years to August of 2001, from the President's daily briefing. I have it in my hand. It was released in 2004. In August of 2001 the intelligence gave the President a document titled: ''Bin Ladin Determined to Strike in US.'' On 9/11, bin Laden and al-Qaida struck the U.S. with devastating effect.

July 2007, secret intelligence assessment from the U.S. National Counterterrorism Center:

> Al Qaeda better positioned to strike the west.

Six years ago, the President's daily briefing said bin Laden was determined to strike the United States, and he did. Six years later:

> Al Qaeda better positioned to strike the west.

So much money spent in lives, in treasury. So much done, so much action in Iraq, where US troops, now go door to door in Baghdad. What has happened to the leaders of those who continue to plan attacks against our country? What has happened to the leaders of the organization who our National Intelligence Director says represent the greatest terrorist threat to our country? They live free, able to speak to the world. Al Zawahiri last week spoke to the world. They live free. They are creating new terrorist training camps, and they are talking to the world about their plans to inflict damage and to attack other parts of the world. That is called failure.

Let me go back again a few years, September 15, 2001. I will not ever forget sitting in the Chamber of the House of Representatives in a joint session of Congress when President Bush came to speak. This country was one at that point. They weren't Republicans and Democrats. This was a country that had been victimized by a devastating attack by terrorists who were perfectly content to give their own lives as long as they could kill innocent others. The President came and spoke to a joint session of Congress. Here is what he said:

> We will not only deal with those who dare attack America, we will deal with those who harbor them and feed them and house them.

On August 31, 2006, at the American Legion National Convention, the President said:

We have made it clear to all nations, if you harbor terrorists, you are just as guilty as the terrorists. You are an enemy of the United States, and you will be held to account.

The question most people ask is: What has happened in 6 years that those who planned and executed the attacks against this country now live free and apparently have reconstituted their strength and are planning further attacks against us? We have committed 150,000 or so American troops over a long period of time, so far a period of time longer than the Second World War lasted, and they are now going door to door in Baghdad in a civil war, where Shia are killing Sunnis and Sunnis are killing Shia, and they are both killing American troops. Sometime, we are going to leave Iraq. That is not the question. The question isn't whether. The American people and this Congress are not going to allow American soldiers to be in the middle of a civil war in Iraq for years ahead. That is not going to be the case. The question isn't whether we leave Iraq. The question is when and how.

But even as we discuss and debate that—and we will this week and next week and perhaps the week after—even as we deal with those issues, the American people have a right, through this Congress, to ask the President: Why is it that those who engineered the attacks are still able to engineer and plan further attacks? Why is it that those who engineered the attacks of 2001 are still active, are still apparently in safe harbors, immune to whatever efforts might or might not have existed to bring them to justice? The President was asked about this at one point, and the President said: I don't think much about Osama bin Laden. Well, he should. We should.

The amendment we offer is very simple. Six long years later, this amendment would require the President every 3 months, every single quarter, to send a classified report to this Congress telling us what has been done in this administration, what has been done to apprehend and bring to justice the leadership of al-Qaida.

If, in fact, this is the greatest terrorist threat to our country—if that is the case—and that does not come from me, that comes from the head of intelligence in this country, John Negroponte, in January of this year—if that is the case, why isn't this our primary objective and our most important objective?

This amendment says the following: It doubles the reward money for the apprehension of Osama bin Laden. It also requires a quarterly classified, top secret report to be provided to Congress to tell us what is being done to attempt to make this a priority and apprehend the leadership of al-Qaida.

I understand it is much easier to recognize failure than to recognize success. I understand that. But it does not take much looking to understand this failure.

Now, Senator CONRAD and I have offered this amendment before, and it passed the Senate before and then was quietly dropped in conference by those who do not want this amendment to survive.

But it seems to me we ought to as a country understand, if we are waking up in the mornings these days and reading, as I read this morning in the newspapers—and yesterday morning and the morning before—that our Homeland Security Secretary has a ''gut feeling'' about this, that or the other thing, and there is a meeting down at the White House to assess these increased risks—we need to understand it is all about al-Qaida. It is all about the leadership of al-Qaida planning additional attacks. It is about the reconstitution of terrorist activities in training camps with the Taliban and al-Qaida. And—guess what—we are going door to door in Baghdad trying to figure out how we deal with the Sunnis and the Shias.

Yes, there are some al-Qaida in Iraq, but those who tell us that is the central fight against terrorism are wrong, and they ought to know it. Go have a secret briefing upstairs. I tell you, if you believe that is the central fight against terrorism, go have a classified, secret briefing, and then you come back and tell me that is what you heard. You will not hear that.

An honest, level look at what is going on in Iraq will describe, unfortunately, a civil war in Iraq. Yes, there is some al-Qaida in Anbar Province and some other al-Qaida influences, but the principal issue in Iraq is sectarian violence or a civil war, and this Congress, at some point, is going to tell this President we are not going to keep American soldiers in the middle of a civil war for any great length of time. But we will insist that we make a priority as one of our significant objectives to bring to justice those who murdered thousands of Americans on 9–11–2001, and we will insist that those who are now planning additional attacks from a secure hideaway—as Mr. Negroponte points out, a secure hideaway—we will insist that some effort be made in this country to deal with that issue.

Let me ask one question. I do not want five reasons or three reasons. I want somebody to give me one good reason why there ought to be any secure hideout anywhere on this Earth for the people, the leaders of al-Qaida who committed this atrocious act against this country in 2001 and who are now planning additional attacks against this country. I do not need five reasons. Is there any reason there ought to be a secure hideout anywhere on this planet for these people? The answer ought to be no.

Getting the terrorists who attacked us on 9–11 has not been our objective, in my judgment. We have gotten sidetracked. It has not been our objective to make this the central issue, and I believe it ought to be the central issue. Senator CONRAD believes that. Senator SALAZAR and others believe it. I expect and hope that tomorrow, when we have a vote at 9:30 in the morning, the Senate will go on record saying it is time—long past the time—for this country to demand that the leadership of al-Qaida be brought to justice and that we interrupt the opportunity of those to be in a secure hideout in Pakistan, planning additional destruction and planning additional deaths against innocent Americans in attacks on our homeland.

That is the amendment. It is simple. No one can misunderstand that amendment. No one can misinterpret it. My hope is, at the end of the vote tomorrow, the Senate will have expressed itself as forcefully as I hope it can on this subject.

I yield the floor and 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. SUNUNU. 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. SUNUNU. Mr. President, I rise to speak on the amendment that has been offered by Senator DORGAN and I have a second-degree amendment, which I will then offer. I also wish to speak about the broader issue before us, the Defense authorization bill, but specifically Iraq and an amendment I have cosponsored with Senators SALAZAR and ALEXANDER dealing with the Iraq Study Group recommendations.

First, I rise in support of the amendment by Senator DORGAN. I certainly agree with him that it is critical we focus on the threat posed by al-Qaida—whether it be in Afghanistan, Pakistan, or Iraq, or the under leadership of al-Zawahiri or Osama bin Laden. That needs to be a focus of our intelligence and security efforts, as well as the efforts our special forces, because of the threat they pose not just to American citizens but to our allies around the world.

We cannot forget they are committed to the death and destruction of innocent civilians around the world. Under no circumstances should we allow any secure area, hideout, or haven to be reconstituted or recreated in the way it was created in Afghanistan under the Taliban rule.

So I am pleased to support his amendment. No one should underestimate the complexity of the challenge of tracking down the leaders of al-Qaida, wherever they are around the world, but the American people should know the greatest effort and the greatest commitment is being undertaken to deal with these terrorists.

AMENDMENT NO. 2184 TO AMENDMENT NO. 2135

Mr. President, at this time, I would, however, like to offer a second-degree

amendment. In the drafting of Senator DORGAN's amendment, he speaks about ''the capture, or information leading to the capture,'' but I certainly believe most Americans would agree we should also provide support, assistance, and a reward if information leads to the death of al-Qaida's leadership.

To that end, my second-degree amendment would simply amend that line to ensure this amendment provides support for the capture or death or information leading to the capture or death of Osama bin Laden, where the $50 million reward is allowed.

Mr. President, at this time, I send the amendment to the desk. It is a second degree to the Dorgan amendment, and I ask for its consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from New Hampshire [Mr. SUNUNU] proposes an amendment numbered 2184 to amendment No. 2135.

Mr. SUNUNU. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

Strike page 2, line 2 and insert in lieu thereof: ''for the capture or death or information leading to the caputure or death of''.

Mr. SUNUNU. The amendment, as I have described it, is a simple, single line that inserts that additional contingency. I think the reporting and the assessment of the threats that are included in this amendment make sense. Members of Congress along with members of our intelligence agencies need the most accurate information available to understand what work is being undertaken, what efforts are being made, and what progress is in tracking these terrorists. I think that, in turn, will help us make much better policy decisions.

So I am pleased to support the amendment. I hope the Senator from North Dakota will accept my second-degree amendment, and I look forward to the adoption of this change to the Defense Authorization bill.

Second, Mr. President, I wish to address the Salazar-Alexander amendment that has been filed, which we certainly hope to have a vote on next week. This is a piece of legislation that I worked with Senators SALAZAR and ALEXANDER on addressing the recommendations of the Iraq Study Group.

The Iraq Study Group was a bipartisan effort covered extensively in the media since the release of their recommendations in December 2006. I made the point at the time, 7 months ago, that those recommendations—there were over 70 different proposals and recommendations in the report—represented the most complete assessment that had been made of the situation in Iraq. That it was a comprehensive framework, and that it did not just deal with security issues but included recommendations addressing political reforms that need to take place within the country with the political dynamics of Iraq. That it included diplomatic efforts that could make a real difference in stabilizing Iraq, supporting the efforts of neighbors and other countries in the region, as well as changes that ought to be made to our intelligence-gathering operation to support not just our effort in Iraq but our effort to deal with al-Qaida in Iraq and around the world. This is something that Senator DORGAN spoke about.

I said at the time that, that framework and those recommendations should be embraced and implemented to the greatest extent possible, first, because it is a comprehensive effort, and second, because the Iraq Study Group proposals recognize the importance and responsibility of the Iraqi Government implementing a series of reforms. They include economic development, reconciliation, the sharing of oil revenues with peoples of all regions and ethnic groups across the country, the debaathification process—designed to bring the country closer together, to create greater unity among the different ethnic factions across Iraq. Only the Iraqi Government, given time, can accomplish these goals which are essential to improving the stability within the region, reducing the level of violence and creating the environment where our troops can be brought home as soon as possible. No American soldier should serve in Iraq a day longer than is absolutely necessary.

This plan is comprehensive in its approach. It recognizes the importance and the responsibility of the Iraqi Government to take steps to improve the situation, and it places an emphasis on the coalition mission, the mission of U.S. forces, in addressing the threat of al-Qaida, focusing on the counterterrorism mission within the country, and training Iraqi security forces.

This is one of the few and perhaps the only truly broad bipartisan effort we have had before us in the last several months. We have seen a series of relatively partisan votes dealing with hard withdrawal dates, criticizing the Pentagon policy in one area or another. On this legislation right now we have seven Democratic sponsors, six or seven Republican sponsors, and I think the support we would receive from both sides of the aisle is even more dramatic than that. So it is a bipartisan effort that attempts to implement or help encourage the implementation of the recommendations of the Iraq Study Group. I think that provides a very sound and strong framework, not just for improving the situation in Iraq but for also addressing a lot of the regional problems that are contributing to its stability in the other countries in the region.

I would encourage all of my colleagues to take a hard look at this legislation. I don't think anyone would agree with 100 percent of all of the recommendations in the Iraq Study Group Report, but I think we can recognize that it is the product of a great deal of effort to understand the situation, assess the climate in Iraq, and make substantive recommendations that will move us forward.

I encourage my colleagues to support the amendment.

Mr. SMITH. Mr. President, today I have submitted an amendment that would help tackle an alarming problem with our men and women who serve in the Armed Forces, the Heroes Helping Heroes Act.

I have introduced the Heroes Helping Heroes Act in the Senate this year to provide funding for peer support programs so that trained veterans can help returning veterans navigate the sometimes perilous transition to civilian life.

My intention is to expand the use of peer-support approaches to assist the reintegration of America's veterans as they return from active duty to their homes and communities. We hope that this legislation will demonstrate the effectiveness of peer-support approaches and ease the burden of the social, economic, medical and psychological struggles our veterans face.

Fortunately, ''peer-support'' approaches offer a low cost and effective adjunct to traditional services by allowing the heroes of our country to help each other. Veteran peer-support offers two things that no kind of professionalized service can ever hope to: the support of someone who has had the same kinds of experiences and truly understands what the veteran is going through; and the potential of a large pool of experienced volunteers who can assist and support returning veterans at very little cost.

Last week I held a hearing on the issues surrounding older veterans in my home State of Oregon. I also held a series of roundtables in both Portland and White City to discuss how we can improve the current mental health system, be it through the VA, Department of Defense, or within the community mental health structure.

What we now refer to as post-traumatic stress disorder was once described as ''soldier's heart'' in the Civil War, ''shell shock'' in World War I, and ''combat fatigue'' in World War II. Whatever the name, it is a serious mental illness and deserves the same type of attention and care provided for a physical wound.

In recent reports, we have heard that 20 to 40 servicemen and women are evacuated each month from Iraq due to mental health problems. In addition to those who are identified, there are many more who will return home after their service to face re-adjustment challenges. Some will need appropriate mental heath care to help them adjust back to ''normal'' life. While others will need medical assistance to heal more serious PTSD issues. Yet others will need help to mentally cope with their physical wounds.

The effectiveness of these approaches has been documented in a variety of

domains. Specifically, for mental health disorders like PTSD and depression, peer-support programs have shown that participation yields improvement in psychiatric symptoms and decreased hospitalizations, the development of larger social support networks, enhanced self-esteem and social functioning, as well as lower services costs. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration, SAMHSA, and even the President's new Freedom Commission on Mental Health, have recognized peer-support approaches as an emerging practice that is helping people recover from traumatic events.

So many of our veterans from previous conflicts, such as World War II and the Korean and Vietnam Wars, needed similar programs once they returned home. Yet I fear that we didn't do enough to help them. With proper and early supports systems in place, we can work to prevent the more serious and chronic mental health issues that come from a lack of intervention.

As our country faces new waves of veterans with mental health illnesses, many of whose issues arise from combat stress, we must ensure that we learn from the lessons of the past. We must ensure that they are cared for, and we must not leave behind those who fought for Nation in previous generations.

I ask my colleagues to support this important amendment.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I am in strong support of the fiscal year 2008 National Defense Authorization Act. This legislation will provide essential resources to our troops as they engage in combat overseas and training at home. It also offers an important opportunity at this crucial time for continued debate as to our Nation's future presence in Iraq. This is the most important challenge facing our country, and I will address this issue in subsequent remarks.

Let me begin by thanking my colleagues, the distinguished chairman and ranking member of the Armed Services Committee, Senator LEVIN and Senator MCCAIN, for their leadership in crafting this bill and for their strong commitment to our Nation's Armed Forces.

This legislation includes a strong commitment to strengthen Navy shipbuilding by including $13.6 billion for shipbuilding programs. The declining size of our Navy fleet is of great concern to me, and this legislation is an important step toward reversing that troubling decline.

The Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Mullen, has proposed a 313-ship Navy shipbuilding plan that seeks to address longstanding congressional concerns that Navy shipbuilding has been inadequately funded in recent years. The resulting instability has had a number of troubling effects on the shipbuilding industrial base and has contributed to significant cost growth in Navy shipbuilding programs. The CNO's plan—combined with more robust funding by Congress—will begin to reverse the decline in Navy shipbuilding.

I strongly support the provisions authorizing the funding for construction of destroyers for the 21st century, the DDG–1000 *Zumwalt* class destroyers. The DDG–1000 represents a significant advance in Navy surface combatant technology. Its capabilities include: superior precision naval surface fire support; advanced stealth technologies; engineering and technological innovations allowing for a reduced crew size; and sophisticated, advanced weapons systems, such as the electromagnetic rail gun.

In addition, it is important to note the tremendous cost savings that will be realized over the lifecycle of a DDG–1000 destroyer compared to that of a DDG–51 destroyer as a result of various innovations and technological advancements.

It is critical that the construction of the first two DDG–1000 destroyers in 2007 and 2008 continue as scheduled without further delays. The dedicated and highly skilled workers at our Nation's surface combatant shipyards, such as Bath Iron Works in my home State of Maine, are simply too valuable to jeopardize with further contracting delays.

That is why I am concerned that the House version of this bill includes a provision to prohibit the start of construction on lead ships until the Secretary of Navy certifies that detailed design is complete. This provision, if enacted, could further delay the Navy's awarding of the construction contract for the first two DDG–1000 destroyers.

The House version would also require that the next-generation class of Navy cruisers, which will be the follow-on to the DDG–1000 destroyer, be powered by nuclear propulsion systems, even though neither of the U.S. Navy's proven surface combatant shipyards, Bath Iron Works and Ingalls Shipyard, has the facilities or certifications required to construct nuclear-powered surface combatant ships. This provision could dramatically increase the costs of future surface combatants, thereby reducing the overall number of ships built at a time when the Navy is seeking to revitalize and modernize its fleet.

Of further concern is the fact that the Senate version of this legislation, as drafted initially, eliminated all funding for the Littoral Combat Ship Program for fiscal year 2008, despite the fact that this ship is an integral part of the CNO's 313-ship plan. Fortunately, I was able to work with my colleagues on the Armed Services Committee during the mark up of this legislation to restore $480 million to ensure continued development of this important program.

I am pleased that the Senate Armed Services Committee also agreed to my request for $50 million in funding to continue the modernization program for the DDG–51 *Arleigh Burke* class destroyers. This program provides significant savings to the Navy by applying some of the technology that is being developed for the DDG–1000 destroyer and backfitting the DDG–51, which may reduce the crew size by 30 to 40 people.

The Senate's fiscal 2008 Defense authorization bill also includes funding for other defense-related projects that benefit Maine and our national security. Funding is provided for machine guns and grenade launchers, both of which are manufactured by the highly skilled workers at Saco Defense in Saco, ME.

All of the Senate Armed Services Committee members are concerned about improving the protection of our troops in harm's way. As such, this bill includes $4 billion above the President's budget request for accelerated procurement of Mine Resistant Ambush Protected, MRAP, vehicles for the Armed Forces and $4.5 billion for the Joint Improvised Explosive Defeat Organization.

In addition, the legislation provides $5 million to the University of Maine's Army Center of Excellence for the production and demonstration of lightweight modular ballistic tent insert panels. The panels provide crucial protection to servicemembers in temporary dining and housing facilities in mobile forward-operating bases in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The legislation also provides $6.9 million for the Maine Army National Guard to field the Integrated Disaster Management System, developed by Global Relief Technologies in Kennebunk and Portsmouth, in support of critical medivac operations in Iraq. This system provides near real-time data management and analysis to and from field operators via state-of-the-art, hand-held devices.

The bill also authorizes $9.7 million for construction of a Consolidated Emergency Control Center at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard. This facility will consolidate all of the shipyard's emergency response entities into one centralized location, which will provide a comprehensive communications and response capability in the event of an emergency.

Finally, I am pleased that this bipartisan Defense bill also authorizes a 3.5-percent across-the-board pay increase for servicemembers, half a percent above the President's budget request. This bill provides the necessary resources to our troops and our Nation and recognizes the enormous contributions made by the State of Maine. The bill provides the necessary funding for our troops, and I offer it my full support.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming is recognized.

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be granted 30 minutes to speak as in morning business.

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

Mr. ENZI. I thank the Chair.

(The remarks of Senator ENZI pertaining to the introduction of S. 1783 are printed in today's RECORD under ''Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.'')

Mr. ENZI. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, is there a preestablished time limit?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There is not.

Mr. GRASSLEY. I will speak roughly, if any Members are interested, 15 minutes or so.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is recognized.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, in October 2006, the North Korean regime of Kim Jong Il culminated years of provocative military action by conducting a nuclear test. In the years preceding that test, North Korea expelled international inspectors, restarted nuclear facilities, and reinvigorated its plutonium production program, this, following the pledge by North Korea, under the agreed framework in 1994, to freeze and dismantle its nuclear weapons program in exchange for our assistance.

I am glad that following this test in 2006, the international community joined the United States in condemning that test, and the United Nations Security Council passed a resolution requiring North Korea to halt their nuclear tests and dismantle their nuclear weapons program.

In February of this year, our State Department negotiators and Bush administration officials heralded a breakthrough agreement with North Korea. On February 13, the six-party negotiators, including the countries of the United States, Russia, South Korea, Japan, China, and North Korea, concluded an agreement to end North Korea's nuclear programs.

President Bush stated he was ''pleased with the agreement reached'' by the six-party talks. He acknowledged that under the agreement, North Korea committed to take several specific actions by a 60-day deadline, and President Bush made clear that the cooperation on economic, humanitarian, and energy assistance to North Korea would be provided ''as the North carries out its commitments to disable its nuclear facilities.'' In other words, there was going to be a step-by-step process by which they disabled their nuclear facilities, that they would then get economic, humanitarian, and energy assistance in North Korea.

Pursuant to the February 13 deal, North Korea was required to take a series of actions within 60 days. This included a freeze of its nuclear installations at Yongbyon, including shutting down a nuclear reactor and plutonium processing plant. The International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna was to be allowed to monitor the freeze at Yongbyon. To no one's surprise, that 60-day deadline that was negotiated passed with no action by the North Koreans. The Yongbyon facility was not shut down. The International Atomic Energy Agency inspectors were not admitted, reminiscent of the pussyfooting with North Korea that went on during the 1990s.

Rather than comply with their commitments under the agreement—then we know what North Korea did, something that was not even negotiated—North Korea proceeded to demand the release of assets frozen at the Macau-based Banco Delta Asia.

The approximately $25 million was frozen by the United States Treasury Department in 2005 once it was discovered that these funds came from a range of fraudulent and illegal activities by the North Koreans; simply stated, counterfeiting of U.S. currency and money laundering.

So what was our response to the North Korean demand? Did we refuse to negotiate the BDA funds until North Korea demonstrated their commitment to follow through on their obligations? I am sorry to say the answer is no. We allowed them to pussyfoot around, as they have done so often.

Our team of negotiators began working on a way to yield to Kim Jong Il's demands, once again accepting their pussyfooting.

Keep in mind, under the terms of the February 13 agreement, North Korea had the unambiguous responsibility to take the first step, which North Korea did not do. In addition, the BDA frozen funds were not stated in or a part of that February 13 agreement. So how do we get to the point of responding to their pussyfooting that they demand something that is not in an agreement that was already agreed to? What good are agreements? Not only had the North Koreans not followed through on their commitment by the 60-day deadline, they were now reopening the agreement by demanding the release of these frozen funds.

So rather than force North Korea to fulfill its commitments, our negotiators were looking for ways to respond to their pussyfooting, their unwillingness to act, and then work to get those frozen funds unfrozen.

Here again Uncle Sam becomes Uncle Sucker for some tinhorn dictator. And we wonder why we are not respected around the world.

In June, after weeks of back and forth between the State Department and Pyongyang, the funds were unfrozen and our own Federal Reserve System was called in to transfer the funds. How illicit these funds were in the first place is the fact that they went to banks all over the world to try to transfer them. They even went to Russia, and Russia would not touch it. But once again Uncle Sam is Uncle Sucker and our Federal Reserve System was willing to pass on that tainted money.

Before North Korea showed even an inkling of followthrough on their obligations, we conceded on an issue that wasn't even a part of the agreement that they were supposed to start dismantling their nuclear program. So it begs the question of whether the BDA funds were part of a side deal that our State Department negotiators had chosen to agree to but not include in that formal agreement.

In addition, in pushing the BDA issue as a precondition for implementing the initial phase of the six-party agreement, Kim Jong Il had succeeded in rendering the timelines of the agreement useless. In other words, what was supposed to happen in 60 days after the February 13 agreement did not happen in 60 days, and more pussyfooting by Kim Jong Il, as we saw in the 1990s and we are seeing again now. Do we ever learn a lesson?

In addition to pushing the BDA issue as a precondition of implementing the initial phase of the agreement, he had in fact pulled one over on the United States. These deadlines, starting February 13, were touted by the six-party negotiators as evidence that North Korea would finally comply with the demands to give up its nuclear program and that they would be held accountable to strict deadlines. Neither of these things happened, and people in North Korea are laughing at Uncle Sucker again.

In recent days and weeks, North Korea has begun to signal that they will take concrete steps to shut down and seal the Yongbyon facility and accede to verification and monitoring procedures of the International Atomic Energy Agency. Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill recently visited North Korea and described his positive discussions with the North Koreans and their intentions to fulfill their obligations.

I wonder if he bothered to discuss with them why they didn't keep their word. Is their word worth anything? I mean, after all, you have an agreement. Can you trust people who sign a name to a document?

It is difficult to understand the positive reaction to the signals now being sent by North Korea 3 months after they were required. In other words, in 60 days things would start to happen. Nothing happened until 3 months after the 60 days. Nonetheless, the International Atomic Energy Agency has, in recent days, determined the scope of its inspection regime and is expected to be back in North Korea within weeks.

But once again, there is no target date for shutting down the Yongbyon facility. It appears that all we are getting from North Korea's leadership is the same old footdragging—pussyfooting around. And while the North Koreans have said they intend to shut down and seal the Yongbyon facility in the near future, do you know what they are doing now? They are putting more demands on us ahead of time. They are now tying those actions to the delivery of heavy oil.

Now, this bears repeating, because, here again, we have more pussyfooting.

Before shutting and sealing the nuclear facility at Yongbyon, North Korea is demanding the delivery of heavy oil, and even other assistance, without any significant action on their part. Mr. President, to use a quote from baseball's great Yogi Berra, it's deja vu all over again.

My great concern is that North Korea is in the process of exploiting, time and again, our willingness to concede to their demands for assistance, regardless of whether they ever actually comply with their commitments of the February agreement in the first place. In other words, if they can sucker us again, they want to sucker us for all they can get out of us.

I understand the angst of North Korea with allowing the International Atomic Energy Agency inspectors in and the freezing of the Yongbyon facility, but these steps are rather small compared to the future requirements. If Kim Jong Il ever complies with the first phase of this agreement, the next phase will require them to make a complete declaration of all nuclear programs, including their uranium enrichment activities.

It also requires the complete disablement of all nuclear facilities. Keep in mind, no timetables, no deadlines have been agreed to for the implementation of this phase. It is during those future steps, when the real heavy lifting will be required, that we will see the true nature of Kim Jong Il.

I haven't seen any change, and I don't expect a lot of change, but I expect the United States to just continue to be suckered and suckered and suckered. And if Kim Jong Il has no intention of giving us his nuclear weapons program, which many believe, it will be crystal clear at that point when real commitments come due.

I am afraid we will likely see more of the same patient back and forth, so-called confidence building—those are words our people use—that our negotiators seem so compelled to pursue. It seems that nothing has been learned during the process with North Korea. Have the diplomats at Foggy Bottom not learned anything from the mistakes made by this administration now, by the Clinton administration previously?

Have we learned nothing from Kim Jong Il's perpetual tactics of agreeing to terms, only to demand then further concessions, as though written agreements mean nothing? We have been down this road before. When are we going to recognize we are being made a sucker, much the same way President Clinton was played along with? When will we say to Pyongyang that enough is enough? When will this Bush administration stand its ground?

I support the international effort towards a diplomatic solution on this matter, but I also think it is imperative we learn from past mistakes. I was deeply skeptical of North Korea's willingness to follow through on the 1994 Agreed Framework, and I am deeply skeptical they will follow through on the February 13 agreement.

If Pyongyang continues to demand assistance without complying with the terms of the February 13 agreement, I hope the President—the present chief executive, President Bush—will quickly realize the deja vu tactics of Kim Jong Il and put an end to the policies of concessions without compliance. If not, President Bush will have done nothing more to address North Korea's nuclear problems than President Clinton.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

TRADE WITH CHINA

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I appreciate the comments of the senior Senator from Iowa and his terrific work on North Korea and what we need to do, and I thank him for that.

Today, new trade figures were released by the Department of Commerce. The news continues to be bad, as our trade policy continues on its merry way. We saw the numbers—$20 billion trade deficit in May, the most recent number they released—$20 billion, leaving us for the year, at this point, a $96 billion trade deficit with China. That is a 15-percent increase over last year. That means we are buying $96 billion more from China than we are selling to China, and that is just through the first 5 months of 2007.

To understand a billion dollars, which is pretty hard to do, if you had a billion dollars and you spent a dollar every second of every minute, of every hour, of every day, it would take 31 years to spend $1 billion. The pages who sit in this Chamber, Mr. President, have lived about a half billion seconds. They are a little older than half of 31 but not much. So our trade deficit with China, so far this year, up through the first 5 months since January 1, is $96 billion.

Our trade deficit with the whole world, just in the month of May, was $66 billion. President Bush the first said a trade deficit of a billion dollars translates into 13,000—mostly manufacturing jobs—13,000 jobs for a $1 billion trade deficit. You can do the math and see what this continued persistent insidious trade deficit is doing to our economy.

Those are just numbers. Last week, in my State of Ohio, just to put faces with those numbers, I was in the town of Lima, the town of Mansfield, where I grew up—my mother had her 87th birthday—I was in Lorain and Marion and Zanesville. Each of those are medium-sized cities of 30,000, 40,000, 50,000, and 60,000 people. Each of those cities contributed so much to the muscle of this country, to our war effort in World War II, to the building of a middle class, and to doing all that industrial America has done, and in each of those communities—Lima, Zanesville, Mansfield, Lorain, and Marion—and I could add Springfield, Xenia, Findlay, Ravenna and Ashtabula—my wife's hometown—I could add all those cities, and in too many cases the growth in this economy that the President trumpets when he comes to Cleveland—a more prosperous area—the President trumpets this economic growth, an economic growth that is passing by too many of these communities.

When I grew up in Mansfield, we had the international headquarters of Tappan-Stowe, Westinghouse, General Motors, and we had a Mansfield Tire Company, and the corporate headquarters of Ohio Grass, and tens of thousands of industrial manufacturing jobs. Today, of those companies I mentioned, only General Motors is still there.

Mr. President, we know what that kind of job loss does to communities when a company closes and lays off 2,000 people to move to Mexico, to China, or whatever happens. When 2,000 people lose their jobs, or 200 people lose their jobs, we know what that does to the community and to the families and to those individuals. We also know it means layoffs for teachers, police officers, firefighters, and that the community is less safe, less prosperous, and there is less opportunity for young people in those communities to go to school and get a good education in hopes of achieving the American dream.

The President's answer to this—and I don't put all of this decline in manufacturing, where my State of Ohio has lost literally hundreds of thousands of jobs, onto the Bush administration. I don't put all of this at the President's feet nor at the feet of failed trade policy, but clearly NAFTA, PNTR with China, the Central American Free Trade Agreement, trade agreements that are now on the table, all of these clearly have contributed to the decline of manufacturing in a big, big way.

So what is the President's answer? We had NAFTA, we had PNTR, we had CAFTA, and so the President's answer is let's do four more trade agreements. Let's do a trade agreement with Panama, let's do a trade agreement with Peru, let's do a trade agreement with Colombia, and let's do a trade agreement with South Korea. Again and again it is the same NAFTA failed model.

This time the President said it is going to be better because we are going to include labor and environmental standards in Peru and in Panama.

First, if that is the case, why today, literally this week, were workers in Peru demonstrating on the streets? Because they think these trade agreements are bad for workers in their country too. The fact is, these trade agreements might be good for some investors short term but they are never good for the workers in Peru, they are not good for workers in Panama, they are not good for the workers in the United States, and they are not good for our communities or families.

The President says: Well, this trade agreement is different because we have labor and environmental standards

that are going to be negotiated alongside them. But the fact is that is what they said about NAFTA. They passed labor and environmental standards in a side agreement and it did nothing to raise the labor and environmental standards in NAFTA, but it did turn a trade surplus that we had with Mexico in 1993 into a trade deficit into the tens of billions of dollars. We know that.

We also know what happened when we signed a trade agreement with Jordan—one I voted for when I was in the House of Representatives—a trade agreement that had solid labor and environmental standards in the middle of the agreement, at the core of the agreement. We also know that happened in 2000.

In 2001, when President Bush took office, his trade representative, Robert Zoellick, wrote a letter to the Jordanian Government saying we were not going to use the dispute resolution and not going to actually enforce the labor and environmental standards. What has happened? Jordan is now a sweatshop with a whole lot of Bangladeshi workers exporting textiles and apparel all over the world and has undercut all that trade agreement has been. It has undercut all that trade agreement should have been. So when I hear the President say we are going to do a trade agreement with Peru and Panama and South Korea and Colombia, it is the same old story. The trade policy is not working. We need something different.

We need to go back and relook at NAFTA, relook at PNTR, relook at CAFTA. We also need a trade policy that will have strong labor and environmental standards and strong food safety standards. Look at what has happened with China in the last few weeks. Look at the news stories about China—contaminants or worse in toothpaste and dog food, defective consumer toys for children. We are exposing American children, American families, Americans generally to the products coming from a country with no regulation, with no health and environmental standards, with no consumer product safety standards—none of those. Yet our market is wide open for them to sell into this country and just end run all the protections we have built to raise our standard of living and to protect our families and our children.

As Senator DORGAN said, we also need trade agreements with benchmarks to allow us to gauge whether these serve the national interest. We should have objectives of opening markets and creating jobs ensuring these benchmarks, so each year we have a report card whether this trade deal is actually helping us export or is this actually exporting jobs. Is this trade deal helping American workers bring their wages up or are these trade agreements pulling wages down? Are they helping to build a middle class or are they, like they have in the past, taking them piece by piece and pulling apart the middle class in this country?

We know what we need to do. We know, unfortunately, what the Bush administration wants to do on trade policy. Now is the time to start by rejecting these trade agreements the administration continues to push down our throats.

At the same time, when we pass trade agreements that work for workers and work for the middle class in this country and work for poorest workers in the developing world, we also need a manufacturing policy in our country. We need a tax system that rewards work, a tax system that encourages production in this country, the enlargement of the manufacturing extension partnership Senator KOHL from Wisconsin so eloquently spoke about, and we need a real alternative energy policy in this country, one that really will mean more manufacturing of wind turbines—the University of Toledo does some of the best wind research in the country—and of solar panels. My State has a variety, a whole bunch of manufacturing capabilities. There is simply no reason we can't help to turn my State into a Silicon Valley of alternative energy.

It is an opportunity whose time has come. It is an opportunity for us, as a Senate and a House, and for Governor Strickland in Ohio and Lieutenant Governor Fisher and all of us to work together, not just to change the direction of trade policy or change our tax system to help the middle class and help American workers but to embark on an alternative energy policy that will help stabilize energy prices, that will help wean us off Middle Eastern oil, and ultimately will help produce good-paying industrial jobs in our State.

I yield the floor.

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

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

AMENDMENT NO. 2184 TO AMENDMENT NO. 2135

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there further debate on the Sununu second-degree amendment, No. 2184? If not, without objection, the amendment is agreed to.

The amendment (No. 2184) was agreed to.

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I move to reconsider the vote, and I move to lay that motion on the table.

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

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that there now be a period for morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

REMEMBERING LADY BIRD JOHNSON

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas is recognized.

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I rise to celebrate the life of Lady Bird Johnson. She was one of the most beloved First Ladies in our Nation's history.

Lady Bird Johnson represented the best of Texas and the best of America. Since the days that I attended the University of Texas with her daughter Lynda, I have known and admired Lady Bird Johnson. I knew her as a woman of dignity, kindness, and graciousness.

Through the years, I have also come to know Luci, one of the most thoughtful people I have ever met. And, of course, most of us in the Senate know Lynda and her husband Chuck Robb, a former Senator from Virginia.

Claudia Alta Taylor Johnson was a Texas original. She was born in Karnack, TX, on December 22, 1912. During her infancy, a nursemaid commented, ''She's as pretty as a ladybird,'' and that nickname virtually replaced her given name of Claudia Alta for the rest of her life.

Lady Bird graduated from Marshall High School in Marshall, TX, studied journalism and art at St. Mary's Episcopal School for Girls, and graduated from the University of Texas.

In 1934, she married Lyndon Baines Johnson, another young, smalltown Texan, who would go on to serve our State in the U.S. House and Senate and then our country as Vice President and later as President of the United States.

In her role as First Lady, Lady Bird shared her love of the outdoors with the American people, becoming the strongest advocate for improving our public spaces. She was instrumental in promoting the Highway Beautification Act, which enhanced the Nation's highway system by limiting billboards and planting roadside areas. I will never pass wildflowers on a median of a highway without thinking of her. She was also a champion of the Head Start Program.

Even after her husband left office in 1969, she remained active in public life and especially in Texas. She served on the University of Texas board of regents. On December 22, 1982—her 70th birthday—she and Helen Hayes founded the National Wildflower Research Center, a nonprofit organization devoted to preserving and reintroducing native plants in planned landscapes at the University of Texas. In 1998, that center was officially renamed the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center.

As the U.S. Senator from Lady Bird's home State, I have consistently worked to strengthen and promote her outstanding legacy. Over the years, I have worked to preserve the LBJ office

in the Jake Pickle Building in Austin and to add the Lady Bird Johnson Plaza to the LBJ Library.

In the fall of 2006, Lady Bird joined me at a groundbreaking ceremony for the new plaza. She was radiant that day. The renovation is still in progress and has now been scheduled to finish by August of 2008—just in time for what would have been Lyndon's 100th birthday. The plaza will be graced by wildflowers which will serve as a tribute to Lady Bird's love of nature. Each wildflower will represent the lifework of a beautiful woman who will always have a special place in the hearts of the people who knew her.

I am proud, as a Texan, that this Texas lady represented the best of our Nation. My thoughts and prayers are with Lady Bird's family—especially her daughters Lynda and Luci. We all mourn her passing, but we should also celebrate this remarkable woman's life.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to Lady Bird Johnson, one of our Nation's most beloved former First Ladies.

Lady Bird Johnson was a conservationist, an enthusiastic political wife, a shrewd businesswoman, and the loving grandmother of a close-knit family.

But she will be best remembered for her efforts to make America a more beautiful country.

Lady Bird Johnson was born Claudia Alta Taylor to her parents near Karnack, TX, in 1912. Legend has it that she received the quaint nickname when a nursemaid exclaimed that the young Claudia was ''as purty as a lady bird.''

At a very early age, she expressed an interest in the environment, and in particular, wildflowers—which would become a lifelong passion.

A graduate of the University of Texas, Lady Bird received a bachelor of arts in history and a bachelor of journalism in 1934.

It was in Austin where she met her future husband, Lyndon Baines Johnson. The connection between the two was electric—after a whirlwind romance and courtship, the two were married in November 1934.

Lady Bird was a loyal and tireless supporter during her husband's political career—usually behind the scenes—from Congressman to Senator, from Senate majority leader to Vice President, and finally, on that fateful day in 1963, as the 36th President of the United States.

And it is her accomplishments as First Lady that distinguished Lady Bird as visionary.

Lady Bird brought a dash of Texas hospitality and genteel charm to the White House during those first dark days of the Johnson administration, as the Nation struggled to recover from the tragedy of the Kennedy assassination.

A life-long lover of the environment, Lady Bird Johnson is best known for the Beautification Act of 1965, which is widely credited as the Lady Bird Act. The legislation encouraged efforts to make the Nation's Interstate System more scenic and limited billboards that could be posted along roadways.

So as millions of American families go on summer vacations, they can thank Lady Bird Johnson for the beautiful wildflowers that bloom along the highways.

It was the first of a major legislative effort undertaken by a First Lady—and helped to transform the very nature of the Office of the First Lady.

Lady Bird began her beautification efforts with the ''First Lady's Committee for a More Beautiful Capital'' in 1965.

Although it is largely known that the First Lady worked to have flower beds and dogwood trees planted throughout the Capitol, Lady Bird also worked to address more urban societal concerns here in the District of Columbia, such as crime, public transportation, mental health and recreation.

And to Lady Bird, beautification meant much more—it embodied a deep commitment to the conservation of this country's natural resources.

In her own words, it meant: ''clean water, clean air, clean roadsides, safe waste disposal and preservation of valued old landmarks, as well as great parks and wilderness areas.''

As First Lady, she was often considered a ''shadow Secretary of the Interior.''

When the White House Conference on Natural Beauty was convened in May 1966, Lady Bird kicked off the conference proceedings by asking this important question:

> Can a great democratic society generate the drive to plan, and having planned, execute projects of great natural beauty?

And thanks in part to her efforts, the Johnson administration helped to oversee some 150 legislative accomplishments for the environment, including: The Clean Air Act; The Wilderness Act of 1964; The Land and Water Conservation Fund; The Wild and Scenic Rivers Program; and numerous additions to the National Park system.

Lady Bird Johnson helped to ensure protection of some of America's finest natural treasures, including the Grand Canyon, the Hudson River Valley, and perhaps closest to my heart, the majestic California redwoods.

Lady Bird Johnson was also closely involved in President Johnson's civil rights efforts and his ''Great Society'' campaign, particularly on the Head Start program.

She helped to ensure that low-income youngsters are given the opportunities they need to compete fairly and equally when they enter elementary school.

So she truly left her stamp as a First Lady.

After leaving the White House in 1969, Lady Bird turned her attention once again to wildflowers. She was instrumental in launching the National Wildflower Research Center in 1982, which was later renamed in her honor.

The center has been central to helping preserve many species of wildflowers and plants, which are increasingly sensitive to the challenges of climate change. In fact, today, some 30 percent of the world's wildflowers and other native flora are endangered.

Lady Bird Johnson was one of America's finest citizens. And she was recognized as such. In 1977, the former First Lady was presented with America's highest civilian award, the Medal of Freedom, by President Gerald Ford. And in 1988, she received the Congressional Gold Medal from President Ronald Reagan.

As Laurance Rockefeller aptly stated when Lady Bird was awarded the Conservation Award for Lifetime Achievement in 1977:

> She's a role model for leadership responsibility for women. That's a big part of her legacy, above and beyond the environment.

Lady Bird Johnson will be very much missed. And I offer my personal and deepest sympathies to her family.

Mr. WEBB. Mr. President, today I join people from throughout America in paying tribute to former First Lady Lady Bird Johnson, who passed away yesterday at the age of 94.

Lady Bird Johnson served as America's First Lady during one of the most tumultuous periods in our Nation's history. During the 1960s, this Nation suffered through the assassinations of our most promising leaders.

We were also bitterly divided by the war in Vietnam. With respect to Vietnam, the Johnson family was personally affected by the war. Many of us recall the White House wedding of Chuck and Lynda Bird Robb in 1967, and how Chuck Robb later distinguished himself as a Marine Corps officer in Vietnam.

And many of our cities literally burned as America struggled to end segregation and to usher in a new era of civil rights. On this last issue, in particular, President Johnson and Lady Bird Johnson deserve historical credit for their leadership and political courage.

It was against this backdrop of political and civil unrest that America was especially blessed by the grace, humility and quiet determination of Lady Bird Johnson.

Mrs. Johnson reminded all of us that America is at her best when we are civil to each other and when we treat our adversaries with tolerance and respect.

Of course, her legacy extends far beyond her grace, charm and steadfast loyalty to President Johnson. To a greater extent perhaps than any other living American, Lady Bird Johnson was the mother of the modern environmental movement.

With her tireless efforts to beautify the countryside, promote conservation and combat roadside litter, Lady Bird Johnson demonstrated the power that each of us has to protect the environment and make our communities more attractive. Again, we need to embrace her legacy today.

In my home State of Virginia, we have always felt a special connection to Lady Bird Johnson. She was the mother of Lynda Bird Robb, who was the Commonwealth's First Lady from 1982 to 1986, and the mother-in-law of Chuck Robb who was Governor at that time and later a distinguished Member of this body.

During her frequent trips to our State, Virginians always embraced Lady Bird Johnson for her warmth, grace, and strength of character. These were the same values for which all Americans held her in such high esteem.

I want to extend to her family and many friends my deepest sympathies, as well as my appreciation for her extraordinary life. America is a much better Nation because of the life and service of Lady Bird Johnson.

INTELLIGENCE ASSESSMENT ON AL-QAIDA

Mr. OBAMA. Mr. President, the new intelligence assessment is a chilling reminder that the American people are less secure than we were on 9/11. According to press reports of the assessment, al-Qaida has reconstituted, rebuilt its training and command and control capabilities, and is better positioned to strike the West. Meanwhile, Osama bin Laden and his top deputy are still on the loose.

If America is again attacked, it will be in no small measure a consequence of the Bush administration's failure to destroy al-Qaida at its roots in Afghanistan and to adequately secure the homeland. The decision to authorize and fight a misguided war in Iraq also created a new cadre of experienced terrorists bent on the destruction of the United States and our allies. The recent attacks in Britain are likely only the beginning of an Iraqi ''blowback,'' which may haunt us for years to come. Since we invaded Iraq, the number of Islamic extremist terrorist attacks—excluding those in Iraq and Afghanistan—has risen by 35 percent worldwide.

We cannot win a war against the terrorists if we are on the wrong battlefield. America must urgently begin redeploying from Iraq and take the fight more effectively to the enemy's home by destroying al-Qaida's leadership along the Afghan-Pakistan border, eliminating their command and control networks, and disrupting their funding. To counter their ability to rebuild these capabilities, we must convince Pakistan to pursue an effective strategy, with our assistance, to deny the terrorists sanctuary in Pakistan's northwest territories. We must also finish the job and secure Afghanistan, where the Taliban is resurgent.

But it will take more than force to defeat this threat. It will take wisdom and patience to restore America's credibility in the Muslim world and reduce both passive and active support for extremists. We need to partner with the vast majority of Muslims in their struggle against those who would distort their religion, create oppressive theocracies, and kill innocents. We must demonstrate through action, not mere words, that America is not at war with Islam, and that we will stand with those Muslims who seek a better future.

Abu Ghraib served as a recruiting poster for violent Islamic extremists. Guantanamo has diminished America's standing in the Muslim world and with our closest allies. The needless violation of our civil liberties at home has damaged our moral authority abroad. All these actions have undercut our fight against terrorists. This is not America, this is not who we are. We must close Guantanamo, renounce torture, and respect the rule of law to be faithful to our own values, prosecute the war on terrorism more effectively, and begin to engender renewed admiration for America in the Muslim world. American values and liberties must be seen as a source of our strength, not as a liability, in the fight against terrorism.

Finally, we must take many long-overdue steps to better secure our homeland. We need to lock down loose nuclear material around the world, upgrade port, transport and chemical plant security, allocate homeland security dollars according to risk, and give local law enforcement the resources and intelligence support to help prevent rather than simply respond to terrorist attacks.

The administration argues this intelligence assessment proves its case for doing more of the same. On the contrary, the American people cannot afford more of the same. This intelligence assessment reminds us once again of the consequences of the decision to authorize and fight the war in Iraq, and to direct our resources away from the wider war on terrorism that was yet to be won. It underscores the urgent need for a new, more effective counterterrorism strategy at home and abroad.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

SPECIALIST DUSTIN WORKMAN

Mr. HAGEL. Mr. President, I rise to express my sympathy over the loss of U.S. Army SPC Dustin Workman II of Greenwood, NE. Specialist Workman was killed on June 28 by an improvised explosive device in Baghdad. He was 19 years old.

Specialist Workman graduated from Ashland-Greenwood High School in 2005. Faculty at Ashland-Greenwood remember his talent for writing and his love of books, though not necessarily the ones assigned to him, his skill in mechanical working, and most importantly, his hard work and commitment to finishing school. From the time he was a freshman at Ashland-Greenwood, Specialist Workman's teachers noticed a strong desire to serve in the Army.

Specialist Workman enlisted with the Army and served with B Company, 2nd Battalion, 12th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, based at Fort Carson, CO. We are proud of Specialist Workman's service to our country, as well as the thousands of other brave Americans serving in Iraq.

Specialist Workman is survived by his parents Dustin and Valerie, younger brother Korey, and younger sister Krysta.

I ask my colleagues to join me and all Americans in honoring SPC Dustin Workman II.

GUATEMALA

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, with the Congress's attention on Iraq and the Middle East, I want to take a moment to alert other Senators to an important issue in Guatemala, a country that rarely makes the news in Washington.

Many of us remember the decades of civil conflict that caused the deaths of an estimated 200,000 Guatemalans, many of them indigenous Mayan civilians. Since those dark days, most Guatemalans have tried to put that tragic period behind them and to build the institutions of democracy that can provide economic development, stability and justice.

While the Guatemalan Army has shrunk to half its size, the peace accords that ended the fighting have yet to be fully realized. Most troubling is the rampant violent crime, organized crime and corruption, much of it perpetrated by illegal armed groups, some of which are comprised of former members of the security forces and their supporters.

During the tenure of President Berger, the Guatemalan Government, with the assistance of the United Nations, has sought to establish a commission to investigate and prosecute these clandestine groups. The first attempt was rejected by Guatemala's Constitutional Court, but recently the Court approved the establishment of an International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala, CICIG. The CICIG is widely regarded as an essential mechanism for combating the cancer of human rights violations and organized crime that are threatening to destroy the foundations of Guatemala's democracy.

It is important to note that the Constitutional Court confirmed that CICIG would work alongside the Attorney-General's office in investigating illegal groups. Far from weakening national sovereignty, CICIG will support Guatemala by helping to strengthen the capacity of the country's weak judicial system.

Not only could CICIG go a long way in fulfilling the government's commitment under the peace accords to combat illegal armed groups, it could also help to uncover the full extent of these groups and dismantle their underlying structure. Most importantly, it would be an unprecedented step in ending the impunity that has been the greatest impediment to establishing the rule of law in Guatemala.

At this point, the future of CICIG is in the hands of the Guatemalan Congress, and with new elections approaching time is running out. It would be a terrible waste of years of hard work by the Guatemalan Government and the United Nations if the CICIG is not approved. Whether for prospective foreign investors or the surviving families of victims of political violence, nothing is more important than knowing the truth and seeing that justice is finally possible.

On June 28, the Senate Appropriations Committee, like the House of Representatives last month, unanimously reported the fiscal year 2008 foreign aid appropriations bill. That legislation would authorize the resumption of assistance for the Guatemalan Air Force, Navy and Army Corps of Engineers, if they are respecting human rights and the Guatemalan Congress ratifies the CICIG agreement.

I urge the Guatemalan Congress to seize this historic opportunity. The alternative, which is almost unthinkable, of rejecting this essential step to uphold the rule of law, would send a chilling message that it is the forces of crime and violence who will determine Guatemala's future. That is not an outcome that Guatemala or its people can afford.

TRIBUTE TO BOB VAN HEUVELEN

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to my chief of staff upon his retirement from the U.S. Senate. Robert Van Heuvelen is recognized not only by me, but also by his colleagues and other Members, as a highly respected, effective, and engaging public servant.

Mr. Van Heuvelen has had a remarkable career in the Federal Government, spanning over 32 years. Bob first came to Capitol Hill in 1975 to work as a legislative assistant for the Honorable Quentin Burdick in the Senate. Following that, he served as assistant counsel for the Environment and Public Works Committee for the Honorable Edmund Muskie. He remained in Washington and went on to work as a Federal prosecutor at the U.S. Department of Justice, rising to the position of deputy and acting chief of the Department of Justice's environmental enforcement section, and eventually to director of the Office of Regulatory Enforcement at the Environmental Protection Agency.

For the past 10 years, I have been privileged to have Bob serve on my staff, first as policy director and then as chief of staff. He brought with him extensive experience in Government and his lifelong dedication to our home State of North Dakota.

During his tenure in my office, some of his most notable accomplishments include coordinating disaster relief for the devastating 1997 flood of Grand Forks, spearheading the work of a tobacco task force to formulate a strong public health response to the tobacco settlements, fighting for a fair Medicare distribution formula and estate tax reform. He also made great strides in developing strong working relations with both his Democratic and Republican colleagues. Bob has helped organize monthly breakfasts, dinners, and policy meetings for chiefs of staff of both parties, fostering a sense of bipartisanship, an accomplishment which is truly praiseworthy.

Bob is a native of Bismarck, ND. He earned his bachelor's degree at Macalester College in Minnesota. Following that, he attended the University of Minnesota, where he received his master's degree in public policy, and George Washington University, where he received his juris doctor. Today, Bob and his wife of 30 years, Jane Sherburne, live in Bethesda, MD. They have three wonderful children—Ben, Elizabeth, and Will.

As Bob goes forward in his life and on to other endeavors, I hope that he proudly looks back at his time here on Capitol Hill and realizes the tremendous difference he has made for North Dakota, our Nation, and in the lives of so many people. I am honored to have had the pleasure to work with him and look forward to our ongoing friendship. We have had great fun doing the Nation's business, and I will miss him. I commend Bob for his many achievements and superior service and wish him the very best.

IN RECOGNITION OF VASILIKI CHRISTOPOULOS

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, today I wish to express Kathy's and my greatest admiration and thanks for a person who over the past 14 years has been the heart and soul of my Washington staff. Vasiliki Alexopoulos Christopoulos has served as my administrative assistant since February 2001 and before that as my legislative director, director of appropriations and as a legislative assistant. From her first days when she began working with us during our 1992 Senate campaign, Kathy and I knew Vas was an extraordinary person.

To describe Vas simply as AA does not do her justice—although that job is at the center of a well-run and effective Washington office and is critical to the success of a Senator. She, rather, has been the heartbeat of the office. Her caring, warm, and always positive personality calms the stormy times and has given all of us a shot of energy when we needed a lift. Vas understands that running an office is more than assigning tasks. Under her leadership, it has been about building an exceptional team. She always makes sure that when there is a task to be done, it is not left to one person; rather, everyone jumps in with Vas leading the way.

Whether it is counseling interns through separation anxieties, interviewing people to join the office, or assisting Kathy, me, and our children in making sense out of this chaotic lifestyle, Vas has always organized, planned, and followed through in a manner that has lead to a successful end in a positive way.

Walking with Vas to get a cup of coffee is like taking a field trip. This is no police officer, no maintenance staff, no congressional staff who does not know Vas and want to share a story. One quickly learns that everyone in Washington is Greek.

Vas could do about anything she wishes, including probably be mayor of Nashua, but she has chosen a different course. She is moving from the friendly confines of Washington and Nashua to the cold, barren land of Grand Rapids, MI. Michigan, where the summer occurs on July 4, will be the better for this. She will bring her sunny personality which will inevitably warm even the chill climate of Michigan.

As Vas and her terrific husband Jimmy embark on this new career path and challenge, seeking all things Greek, Kathy joins me in thanking her for all her years of dedication to the Gregg family, our office staff, and all the people of New Hampshire. We have all greatly benefited from her commitment and love. She has been and will remain a part of our family and although she will be a bit further away, we wish her only the best and say thank you.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

HONORING REYNOLDS, NORTH DAKOTA

• Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, today I recognize a community in North Dakota that will be celebrating its anniversary. On July 27–29, the residents of Reynolds will gather to celebrate their community's history and founding.

Reynolds is a vibrant community located in eastern North Dakota. Founded in 1880, years before North Dakota was granted statehood, Reynolds was named for Dr. Henry A. Reynolds, who served as a surgeon in the Civil War and had recently migrated to the area from Maine. Reynolds, like many other North Dakota communities, was originally incorporated with the arrival of the railroad.

Reynolds is now, and always has been, a very unique community. The city itself has two churches, two elevators, and is separated by two counties. The number two is very important to the residents of Reynolds, and celebrating its quasquicentennial 2 years late is, as the community says, kind of a ''Reynoldsism.''

Today, Reynolds has much to celebrate. Its 125th+2 celebration will be an event worth taking in. Festivities will include a steak fry, parade, street fair, alumni baseball game, fireworks, and much more.

I ask the Senate to join me in congratulating Reynolds, ND, and its residents on their first 127 years and in wishing them well in the future. By honoring Reynolds and all the other historic small towns of North Dakota, we keep the great pioneering frontier spirit alive for future generations. It is places such as Reynolds that have helped to shape this country into what it is today, which is why this fine community is deserving of our recognition.

Reynolds has a proud past and a bright future.●

TRIBUTE TO BERNARD WOODARD

● Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, today I celebrate the life and mourn the recent passing, of a great Texan, Thurmond Bernard Woodard. Mr. Woodard recently lost a courageous battle with cancer, a foe he had been battling since 2005.

Born on January 9, 1949, in Ocala, FL, Thurmond Woodard learned the importance of family at an early age. His childhood and adolescence were marked by the qualities that would later endear him to all—strong will, strong character, and uncompromising integrity. He went on to earn a bachelor's degree in accounting from Hampton University and then embarked on a storied career in finance, marketing, sales, and human-resources management.

In October 2000, Woodard was serving as president and chief operating officer for Roosevelt Thomas Consulting and Training in Atlanta. In that role, he spent his days advising the company on the importance and necessity of integrating diversity within business strategies. Recognizing his talent and vision, Austin-based Dell Inc. decided to try and lure him away by offering him the job of vice president for global diversity and chief ethics, privacy, and compliance officer. Thankfully for Dell, he accepted the offer and never looked back. He held those positions until his death in April.

Known for his dedication to creating cultures of dignity, respect, and inclusion, Thurmond promoted the importance of leadership through creating opportunity for all. ''We cannot resist change that is inevitable,'' he said. ''We have to get on board and help drive that change.''

That eloquence earned him the admiration of his colleagues, including Dell's chief executive Michael Dell who said, ''His sensible counsel, generosity of spirit, tireless dedication, and optimism were appreciated and admired by all he touched. His passing leaves a void impossible to fill.''

That void is seen not only at Dell but also in the many Texas communities in which he had a profound impact. Even in the difficult stages of his illness, he served as deacon and Sunday school teacher at the David Chapel Missionary Baptist Church in downtown Austin. His work as a mentor and community activist was recognized last year when the Austin Area Urban League honored him with the Whitney M. Young Jr. Award for his efforts to promote diversity through the strengthening of business and community partnerships.

Thurmond's impact could also be seen in our Nation's Capitol, where he served as a board member of the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation and was the key architect of the foundation's AVOICE virtual library on the history of African Americans in Congress. Other organizations that continue to benefit from his efforts and generosity in Washington include the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute's Center for Latino Leadership and Operation Hope's financial literacy center in Anacostia.

Dell will honor his legacy of outreach by endowing a scholarship in his name for students of color and students from disadvantaged economic backgrounds around the world.

Even though he was known for being an incredibly successful businessman and community leader, Thurmond was known first as an incredibly successful family man. A beloved father and husband, he leaves behind his wonderful wife of 37 years Suzanne, his children Michelynn and Derek, and countless friends. They recall with fondness Thurmond's love of humor, friendship, and the occasional round of golf.

He lived life with vigor, passion, and unwavering optimism. And even though he has been called home to God, Thurmond's selflessness and decency will always serve to guide and inspire us all.

Mr. President, please join me in celebrating the life of Thurmond Bernard Woodard.●

RETIREMENT OF DALE W. SOPPER

● Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, today we recognize a distinguished executive at the Social Security Administration, Dale W. Sopper. Dale is the Deputy Commissioner for Budget, Finance and Management. He is a dedicated public servant who has served his country in public service for 42 years.

A native of Allentown, PA, he began his Federal career as a claims insurance specialist in the local Social Security Office in Kansas City, MO. After 2 years, he was selected for the Management Intern Program at the then-Department of Health, Education and Welfare. He served in a number of increasingly responsible positions there and in the Department of Health and Human Services over the next 16 years, ultimately serving as HHS' Assistant Secretary for Management and Budget.

Dale returned to the Social Security Administration in 1983 as the Deputy Associate Commissioner for Management, Budget and Personnel. In his current position as Deputy Commissioner for Budget, Finance and Management, Dale is responsible for providing executive leadership and direction in administering: a comprehensive financial program of budget policy, formulation and execution; accounting policy and operations; the agency's acquisition and grants program; audit resolution and liaison; the internal controls program; agencywide facilities and publications management programs; and the agency's efforts to improve annual wage reporting and wage reconciliation activities. In addition, Dale serves as SSA's chief financial officer, senior procurement executive and principal deputy ethics counselor.

During Dale's long and distinguished career with both agencies, he has received many awards—of special note, the Presidential Rank Awards for Distinguished Executive and Meritorious Executive, the Donald Scantlebury Memorial Award, the Elmer Staats Award and the Frank Greathouse Distinguished Leadership Award.

Dale will retire from the Social Security Administration on August 3, 2007. He is an exceptional career executive who has consistently demonstrated strength, integrity, diligence and a relentless commitment to public service and the well-being of our citizens across the Nation. Through his extraordinary leadership and achievements, he has inspired countless men and women with whom he has worked over these past 42 years.

It is important that we in Congress recognize the many men and women who devote their working lives to improve the lives of others. Career civil servants often do their work in quiet anonymity behind the scenes providing vital service to the American people. They are rarely recognized for their important contribution. Dale Sopper is one of those people. His record of leadership at the Social Security Administration and his commitment to providing the American people with effective and compassionate service is a record of which he can be justly proud.

I wish Dale all the best in his retirement from Federal service and thank him for his many years of dedicated service.●

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by Ms. Evans, one of his secretaries.

EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

As in executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate messages from the President of the United States submitting sundry nominations and a treaty which were referred to the appropriate committees.

(The nominations received today are printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)

INITIAL ASSESSMENT REPORT RELATIVE TO THE IRAQI BENCHMARKS—PM 20

The PRESIDING OFFICER laid before the Senate the following message from the President of the United States, together with an accompanying report; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations:

To the Congress of the United States:

Consistent with section 1314 of the U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Care, Katrina Recovery, and Iraq Accountability Appropriations Act, 2007 (Public Law 110–28) (the ''Act''), attached is the report that assesses the status of each of the 18 Iraqi benchmarks contained in the Act and declares whether satisfactory progress toward meeting these benchmarks is, or is not, being achieved.

This report has been prepared in consultation with the Secretaries of State and Defense; Commander, Multi-National Forces-Iraq; the United States Ambassador to Iraq; and the Commander of United States Central Command.

GEORGE W. BUSH.
THE WHITE HOUSE, *July 12, 2007.*

EXECUTIVE AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS

The following communications were laid before the Senate, together with accompanying papers, reports, and documents, and were referred as indicated:

EC–2558. A communication from the Secretary of the Interior, transmitting the report of a draft bill entitled, ''Preserve America and Save America's Treasures Act''; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

EC–2559. A communication from the Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works), transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to a flood damage reduction project for the Des Moines and Raccoon Rivers, Des Moines, Iowa; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC–2560. A communication from the Chief of the Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Partial Termination and Turnover Rate'' (Rev. Rul. 2007–43) received on July 11, 2007; to the Committee on Finance.

EC–2561. A communication from the Director, Office of Labor-Management Standards, Department of Labor, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Labor Organization Officer and Employee Report, Form LM–30'' (RIN1215–AB49) received on July 11, 2007; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

EC–2562. A communication from the Chairman, Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on D.C. Act 17–70, ''Safe and Stable Homes for Children and Youth Amendment Act of 2007'' received on July 11, 2007; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

PETITIONS AND MEMORIALS

The following petitions and memorials were laid before the Senate and were referred or ordered to lie on the table as indicated:

POM–148. A resolution adopted by the City Council for the City of Okeechobee of the State of Florida urging Congress to appropriate the funds necessary to bring the Herbert Hoover Dike into compliance with current levee safety standards; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

POM–149. A resolution adopted by the Council of the City of North Miami of the State of Florida urging Congress to appropriate the funds necessary to bring the Herbert Hoover dike into compliance with current levee protection safety standards; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

POM–150. A concurrent resolution adopted by the Legislature of the State of Utah expressing opposition to the Divine Strake explosive test that is to be conducted in Nevada in 2007; to the Committee on Armed Services.

Whereas, ''Divine Strake'' is the code name for a large high-explosive test to be conducted by the Defense Threat Reduction Agency;

Whereas, the Pentagon has stated the purpose of the test is to ''determine the potential for future non-nuclear concepts,'' such as high-energy weapons or the simultaneous use of multiple conventional bombs to destroy deeply buried and fortified military targets, as an alternative to detonating a nuclear device;

Whereas, the test was originally planned to take place June 2, 2006 at the site of an existing underground tunnel in the United States Department of Energy Nevada Test Site, but was postponed several times due to legal action, then later delayed until 2007;

Whereas, the test is scheduled to utilize 700 tons of an ammonium nitrate combined with fuel oil explosive, which is equivalent to 593 tons of TNT;

Whereas, there is concern that the explosion could stir up nuclear particles, left from previous tests conducted decades earlier at the Nevada test site, into the atmosphere;

Whereas, in December 2006, the revision to the Environmental Assessment was released, and although the study concluded that there are no health risks to persons outside the blast area, it stated, ''Since suspended natural radionuclides and resuspended fallout radionuclides from the detonation have potential to be transported off of the NTS by wind, they may contribute a radiological dose to the public'';

Whereas, on January 22, 2006, the Washington County Commission issued a statement opposing the federal government's plan to conduct the test which reads in part, ''The City of St. George has a unique history due to its proximity to the Nevada Nuclear Test Site during the atomic age. . . thousands of early deaths of those living in southern Utah and the surrounding areas have been attributed to nuclear testing during the 1950s and 1960s at the site. Many St. George residents and others have suffered incalculable loss as a result of radioactive fallout exposure from the detonations at the site'';

Whereas, the Commission added, ''To assure the safety and well-being of our citizenry, these concerns must be carefully studied and evaluated before a decision is made to proceed with the proposed detonation''; and

Whereas, much more needs to be done to assure that there is never a repeat of the immense suffering endured by citizens of Utah and nearby states due to the nuclear fallout from past tests at the Nevada Test Site. Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Legislature of the state of Utah, the Governor concurring therein, express opposition to the Divine Strake high-explosive test to be conducted by the Defense Threat Reduction Agency at the United States Department of Energy Nevada Test Site in 2007. Be it further

Resolved, That copies of this resolution be sent to the Defense Threat Reduction Agency, the United States Department of Defense, the United States Department of Energy Nevada Test Site, the Washington County Commission, and to the members of Utah's congressional delegation.

POM–151. A resolution adopted by the House of Representatives of the State of Michigan urging Congress to enact H.R. 1619 or S. 587 to direct the Secretary of the Treasury to mint coins to commemorate the Ford Model T; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 78

Whereas, Michigan's integral role as the heart of the automobile industry in our country and around the world is well established. Nearly 100 years ago, an especially meaningful chapter in this long history began with the opening of the Highland Park Ford Plant that is acknowledged to be the birthplace of the assembly line. In addition, the more than 15 million Model T Fords that were built between 1908 and 1927 reshaped the American landscape and our way of life; and

Whereas, The new age in manufacturing that was born in Michigan and the Model T Ford set in motion changes in how Americans live and how people travel around the world. The rise in the American middle class, the ability to prevail in defense of our nation in world wars, and subsequent technological advances all can be traced in significant measure to the automobile industry that began with the vision and hard work of the pioneer mechanics in Michigan; and

Whereas, Congress has before it legislation that would require the Secretary of the Treasury to mint not more than 500,000 coins to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Model T Ford automobile. Under this legislation, these dollar coins, which would be public tender, would be comprised of 90 percent silver and 10 percent copper. The legislation also provides that the money raised by a surcharge above the face value would be distributed to the Motor Cities National Heritage Area through the Automobile National Heritage Partnership and to the Edison Institute. This money would create endowments to support the celebration of the Model T and the preservation of its story through educational programs and displays; Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives, That we memorialize the Congress of the United States to enact H.R. 1619 or S. 587, to direct the Secretary of the Treasury to mint coins to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Model T Ford; and be it further

Resolved, That copies of this resolution be transmitted to the President of the United States Senate, the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives, and the members of the Michigan congressional delegation.

POM–152. A joint resolution adopted by the Senate of the State of Tennessee urging Congress to address the economic impact of interchange fees and merchant discount charges and develop clear and concise disclosure to consumers and retailers; to the Committee on Banking,Housing, and Urban Affairs.

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 361

Whereas, consumers are increasingly using credit and debit cards and other electronic transactions to make purchases, and the number of credit and debit card transactions each year now exceeds the number of check transactions; and

Whereas, payment system networks and technology provide significant economic benefits to merchants and consumers; and

Whereas, merchants and retailers pay merchant discount fees, including interchange fees, to access payment system networks for credit and debit transactions; and

Whereas, the fees, policies, and practices of credit card organizations have social and economic consequences for merchants and consumers; and

Whereas, interchange costs have risen dramatically in recent years and the number of transactions involving interchange fees has grown in volume in recent years due to consumer preference to use credit and debit cards and the expansions in technology facilitating the use of credit card systems; and

Whereas, American consumers and retailers pay the highest credit card fees in the world, with rates averaging close to 2 percent and debit card fees averaging close to 1 percent; and

Whereas, merchants are required to pay merchant discount fees, including interchange fees, to banks to access credit and debit card payment system networks; and

Whereas, interchange fees are ultimately passed on to consumers, including those who pay by cash or check, in the form of higher prices; and

Whereas, it is advantageous to have competitive economic models that assure a highly competitive marketplace; and

Whereas, with more and more consumers using electronic payment methods, the United States Congress needs to assure a highly competitive and vibrant market that promotes an economic playing field that is fair to consumers, merchants, and card providers alike. Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate of the One Hundred Fifth General Assembly of the State of Tennessee, the House of Representatives concurring, that this General Assembly hereby urges the Congress of the United States of America to act expeditiously to address the economic impact of interchange fees and other merchant discount fees and develop clear and concise disclosure to consumers and retailers. Be it further

Resolved, That this General Assembly strongly urges each member of the Tennessee congressional delegation to utilize the full measure of his or her influence to assess the economic impact of interchange fees and other merchant discount fees. Be it further

Resolved, That the Chief Clerk of the House of Representatives is directed to transmit a certified copy of this resolution to the President and the Secretary of the United States Senate; the Speaker and the Clerk of the United States House of Representatives; and to each member of the Tennessee congressional delegation.

POM–153. A resolution adopted by the House of Representatives of the State of Pennsylvania urging Congress to provide equitable funding to the Department of Housing and Urban Development for the operation of quality affordable housing; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 292

Whereas, Pennsylvania's public housing authorities are essential in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania; and

Whereas, Pennsylvania is home to 90 public housing authorities serving an estimated 245,819 residents of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania; and

Whereas, Pennsylvania's public housing authorities provide high-quality affordable housing to the residents in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania through the use of Federal resources and programs; and

Whereas, Pennsylvania's public housing authorities have successfully assisted residents of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania with moving to work programs and preapprenticeship training, resulting in greater self-sufficiency and a reduced burden on Commonwealth resources; and

Whereas, developments built by Pennsylvania's public housing authorities have in some instances increased the values of neighboring properties and communities in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania by 142%; and

Whereas, new funding guidelines developed by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development have resulted in reduced funding for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, its public housing authorities and the Pennsylvanians who rely on these services; and

Whereas, Pennsylvania's public housing authorities are a major employer in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and funding cuts from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development have resulted in drastic layoffs and diminished services to the residents of public housing; therefore be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania recognize the importance of the quality services, support and housing provided by Pennsylvania's public housing authorities and respectfully urge the Congress to provide equitable funding to the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development for the operation of quality affordable housing; and be it further

Resolved, That copies of this resolution be transmitted to the presiding officers of each house of Congress and to each member of Congress from Pennsylvania.

POM–154. A concurrent resolution adopted by the Legislature of the State of Utah expressing support for acquiring a second airport surveillance radar facility for the Salt Lake International Airport; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 2

Whereas, Salt Lake City International Airport (SLCIA) is one of the nation's primary hub airports, is the second largest hub airport for Delta Air Lines and processed over 455,000 aircraft operations during 2005 making it the 18th busiest airport in the world, and conservative forecasts project operations to grow to over 634,000 operations by 2025;

Whereas, the Provo Airport is the second busiest airport in Utah with over 175,000 operations a year and was recently designated as the primary reliever to SLCIA by major commercial airlines including Delta, Frontier, and Southwest, a designation that significantly increases the demand on Provo Airport;

Whereas, the Salt Lake City Terminal/TRACON (terminal radar approach control) facility has responsibility for coordinating the safe and efficient movement of aircraft within the regional airspace but experiences important limitations in the regulation of aircraft using the Provo Airport and airports in surrounding communities;

Whereas, coordinating air traffic activity within the region is complicated significantly because the mountainous terrain along the Wasatch Front creates a sizeable radar shadow which prevents air traffic controllers from seeing aircraft below 8,000 feet, above ground level, in Utah Valley, while aircraft operating below 500 feet, above ground level, at the Salt Lake City Airport II cannot be seen;

Whereas, aircraft arriving or departing the Provo Airport and surrounding airports regularly interact with commercial aircraft using SLCIA; when aircraft operating at these airports request entry into SLCIA airspace, air traffic controllers are not able to determine the precise location of the aircraft due to lack of radar coverage; the slower speeds of these aircraft combined with airspace congestion can present safety concerns for commercial airline operations as well as for general aviation;

Whereas, the lack of ASR–11 (automated surveillance radar) at Provo Airport causes significant delays to take-off and landing operations during poor weather conditions, resulting in a real and significant threat to air safety;

Whereas, there is no backup radar equipment to provide continuous radar coverage to the surface when existing radar becomes inoperable, and the volume of activity generated by the Delta Air Line hub is closely linked to the efficiency of the entire national air transportation system;

Whereas, ASR–11 would provide essential redundancy to assure that adequate safety is maintained at all times; and

Whereas, the radar shadow and the limitations it creates can be corrected by installing a second ASR–11 facility that would be fully integrated with the existing radar at SLCIA and would be optimally located at the Point of the Mountain, providing major safety and efficiency benefits to all of the airports previously mentioned: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Legislature of the state of Utah, the Governor concurring therein, support the critical need to acquire ASR–11 (automated surveillance radar) to provide radar redundancy for the Sale Lake City International Airport, and to achieve full radar coverage for Provo Airport and other general aviation airports. Be it further

Resolved, That the Legislature and the Governor request that Utah's Congressional Delegation seek the appropriation of funds in the 2008 FAA Facilities and Equipment budget needed to acquire ASR–11, as well as to finalize site selection and to acquire property to the extent needed for the installation of the system. Be it further

Resolved, That copies of this resolution be sent to the city of Provo, the Provo Airport, Delta Air Lines, Frontier Air Lines, Southwest Air Lines, and to the members of Utah's congressional delegation.

POM–155. A concurrent resolution adopted by the Legislature of the State of Utah urging Congress to take action to help stop children and employees from accessing Internet pornography; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 3

Whereas, the Internet has become an extremely important and popular means of exchanging information, and is relied upon in Utah for business, education, recreation, and other uses;

Whereas, many Internet sites contain material that is pornographic, either obscene or inappropriate for children, and a majority of these sites originate within the United States but outside of the state of Utah;

Whereas, the availability of Internet pornography on the job costs Utah employers significant numbers of work hours, strains employers' computer equipment, reduces productivity, and leads to potentially hostile work environments for men and women;

Whereas, while the custody, care, and nurturing of children resides primarily with parents, the widespread availability of Internet pornography and the ability of children to circumvent existing filtering technology defeat the best attempts at parental supervision or control;

Whereas, Internet pornographers use evolving techniques to lure Utah children and others into viewing and purchasing pornographic material, defying existing technology designed to block adult content;

Whereas, current methods for protecting computers and computer networks from unwanted Internet content are expensive, block more than the intended content, and are easily circumvented;

Whereas, because children, employees, and others may seek out pornography, warnings and other labels meant to help avoid inadvertent hits on pornographic sites may simply increase the likelihood that these sites will be visited;

Whereas, credit card verification systems burden credit card companies, are expensive and time consuming to establish and maintain, and inhibit legal speech;

Whereas, other forms of age verification have not been practicable;

Whereas, prior Congressional attempts to address children's access to Internet pronography have been held unconstitutional or otherwise have not passed constitutional scrutiny;

Whereas, prior Congressional attempts to address children's access to Internet pornography have not been based on technology that allows individual Internet users to select what kind of Internet content enters their homes and work spaces;

Whereas, protecting the physical and psychological well-being of Utah's children by shielding them from inappropriate materials is a compelling interest of the Legislature of the State of Utah;

Whereas, protecting the right of Utah's citizens to control what materials enter their homes and other private property is a compelling interest of the Legislature of the State of Utah;

Whereas, although the State of Utah has taken rigorous action in an attempt to shield Utah's children from obscenity and other inappropriate adult content, it cannot effectively curb the problems with Internet pornography within its borders without the support of the United States government;

Whereas, the United States remains in control of the Internet through the Department of Commerce, and the National Telecommunication and Information Association; and

Whereas, the United States has the ability to create appropriate policies and enforcement tools to effectively deal with these issues: *Now, therefore, be it*

Resolved, that the Legislature of the state of Utah, the Governor concurring therein, strongly urges the United States Congress to take action to help stop children and employees from accessing Internet pornography; *be it further*

Resolved, that the Legislature and the Governor strongly urge the United States Congress to seriously consider enacting legislation to facilitate a technology-based solution that allows parents and employers to subscribe to Internet access services that exclude adult content; *be it further*

Resolved, that a copy of this resolution be sent to the Majority Leader of the United States Senate, the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives, the President of the United States, and the members of Utah's congressional delegation.

POM–156. A resolution adopted by the House of Representatives of the State of Michigan urging Congress to encourage expansion of existing or the construction of new petroleum refineries to meet increasing energy needs; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 121

Whereas, The price of petroleum products has been unpredictable. Between December 2006 and the end of February 2007, the price of crude oil fluctuated between 62 dollars a barrel and 50 dollars several times. Currently, the world crude oil price exceeds 66 dollars a barrel. Recently, oil futures leapt above 72 dollars a barrel on the New York Mercantile Exchange due to shrinking gasoline supplies and international tensions. Increased refinery capacity would buffer the United States from some of the more volatile price swings that occur during periods of global conflict and which are often outside of our national control; and

Whereas, There has not been a new oil refinery built in the United States in nearly 30 years. Yet, in the intervening years, the total energy demand in the United States has grown by about 40 percent. According to the United States Energy Information Administration, the projected petroleum demand between 2003 and 2025 will increase by 30 percent. We must plan for our future energy needs by incorporating new petroleum refineries into the overall energy policy of the United States; and

Whereas, Recent major investments in the Marathon Refinery located in the city of Detroit, Michigan's only refinery, will increase the output by about 28 percent, from 74,000 barrels per day to over 102,000 barrels per day. Marathon's investment of $300 million was made possible through the collaborative efforts of Marathon, the city of Detroit, and the state of Michigan. Marathon's commitment to Michigan and its collaboration with the city and state to create a renaissance zone encompassing the refinery illustrates the type of creative solutions that can be used to promote increased capacity or the construction of new refineries; and

Whereas, Constructing new refineries or expanding current facilities would also create new jobs and increase gasoline, fuels, and distillate output—all vital components of strengthening our economy, Michigan is well placed to locate a new refinery due to our proximity with Canada, this country's largest source of imported petroleum. Moreover, Michigan's highly skilled labor force could adapt to employment in the refinery industry; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives, That we memorialize the Congress of the United States to establish a national energy policy that promotes the expansion of existing or construction of new petroleum refineries in the United States; and be it further

Resolved, That copies of this resolution be transmitted to the President of the United States Senate, the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives, the members of the Michigan congressional delegation, the United States Environmental Protection Agency, the United States Department of Energy, the American Petroleum Institute, and the American Petroleum Industries of Michigan.

POM–157. A resolution adopted by the Senate of the State of Louisiana urging Congress to pass the Non-Market Economy Trade Remedy Act of 2007; to the Committee on Finance.

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 119

Whereas, H.R. 1229, the ''Non-Market Economy Trade Remedy Act of 2007,'' will ensure that the United States countervailing duty law applies to imports from non-market economies; and

Whereas, the purpose of the countervailing duty law is to offset any unfair competitive advantage that foreign manufacturers or exporters have as a result of subsidies; and

Whereas, manufacturing is a vital part of the American economy; and

Whereas, each American manufacturing job results in the creation of approximately four additional jobs; and

Whereas, since 1997, Louisiana has lost over thirty-nine thousand manufacturing jobs due to unfair trade practices; and

Whereas, Louisiana's coastal area is home to some of the nation's premiere commercial fisheries, accounting for 30% of the commercial fisheries production of the lower 48 states; and

Whereas, the Louisiana seafood industry provides an annual economic impact of approximately two billion eight hundred million dollars and over thirty-one thousand jobs; and

Whereas, the Louisiana seafood industry has lost over eleven thousand jobs and millions of dollars due to illegally subsidized seafood imports and dumping from foreign nations; and

Whereas, industries that once were the pride of their communities and employed generations of the same family have been shut down resulting from jobs being shifted to foreign nations where labor is cheap and environmental standards are not enforced; and

Whereas, billions of dollars in wages and millions of jobs are expected to move from the United States to low-cost nations by 2015; and

Whereas, H.R. 1229, the ''Non-Market Economy Trade Remedy Act of 2007,'' is being considered in Congress to correct the long-standing inequity of trade law, and requires the Department of Commerce to take action in countervailing duty cases in support of American businesses:

Now therefore, be it Resolved, that the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana memorializes the Congress of the United States to vote in favor of H.R. 1229, the ''Non-Market Economy Trade Remedy Act of 2007.'' and; *be it further Resolved*, that a copy of this Resolution shall be transmitted to the secretary of the United States Senate and the clerk of the United States House of Representatives and to each member of the Louisiana delegation to the United States Congress.

POM–158. A resolution adopted by the House of Representatives of the State of Michigan urging Congress to oppose the South Korea Free Trade Agreement; to the Committee on Finance.

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 101

Whereas, the Bush Administration has negotiated a new free trade agreement with South Korea that fails to protect worker rights and will jeopardize tens of thousands of automotive jobs in the United States; and

Whereas, this flawed agreement is the largest since the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and it contains no enforceable protections for workers' rights and will undermine the ability of the government to protect food safety, the environment, and public health; and

Whereas, this agreement will exacerbate and accelerate the loss of good jobs in the United States manufacturing sector, especially in automobiles, apparel, and electronics. The United States already has a massive trade deficit with South Korea, with a large portion of that deficit in automobiles and automobile parts; and

Whereas, the agreement will jeopardize thousands of automobile jobs because it opens the United States automobile market further while failing to address the barriers to the sale of United States automobiles in South Korea; and

Whereas, the United States Trade Representative rejected a very sensible proposal put forward by a bipartisan group of members of Congress to tie any opening of the United States automobile market to concrete benchmarks in United States sales in Korea. Until such benchmarks are set, we do not have confidence that the South Korea Free Trade Agreement is in the best interests of the United States: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate, That we urge the United States Congress to oppose the South Korea Free Trade Agreement; and be it further

Resolved, That copies of this resolution be transmitted to the President of the United States Senate, the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives, and the members of the Michigan congressional delegation.

POM–159. A concurrent resolution adopted by the Legislature of the State of Utah urging Congress to pass legislation to resolve federal identity theft and fraud issues; to the Committee on Finance.

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 1

Whereas, identity theft and fraud includes the theft of a person's Social Security number for the purpose of obtaining employment, avoiding child support payments, or for other personal gain;

Whereas, contributing to the problems are companies that do not have the tools or resources necessary to adequately verify whether or not a Social Security number is fraudulent and companies that are notified of fraudulent Social Security numbers of employees but take no corrective action; and

Whereas, identity theft and fraud are national problems that must be addressed with additional countermeasure: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Legislature of the state of Utah, the Governor concurring therein, urge the United States Congress to support, work to pass, and vote for legislation that prevents the misuse of a person's Social Security number, whether by an individual or a company. Be it further

Resolved, That the Legislature and Governor urge that the legislation include increased and effective verification requirements by companies, accompanied by the tools and resources necessary to adequately verify whether or not a Social Security number is fraudulent, and increased penalties for individuals who intentionally use fraudulent Social Security numbers to obtain employment, avoid child support obligations, or for other personal gain. Be it further

Resolved, That the Legislature and the Governor urge that the legislation include increased penalties for companies who repeatedly report wages on employees with fraudulent Social Security numbers. Be it further

Resolved, That copies of this resolution be sent to the Majority Leader of the United States Senate, the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives, the Social Security Administration, the Utah Department of Workforce Services, and to the members of Utah's congressional delegation.

POM–160. A joint resolution adopted by the Legislature of the State of Utah urging Congress to pass the Children's Health Insurance Program; to the Committee on Finance.

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 3

Whereas, the health of Utah's children is of paramount importance to Utah's families;

Whereas, poor child health is a threat to the educational achievement, social, and psychological well-being of Utah's children;

Whereas, protecting the health of our children is essential to the well-being of our youngest citizens and the quality of life in our state;

Whereas, the Utah's Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), which has enrolled 112,119 uninsured children since its inception in 1998, is an integral part of the arrangements for health benefits for the children of Utah;

Whereas, Utah's CHIP is of great value in preserving child wellness, preventing and treating childhood disease, improving health outcomes, and reducing overall health costs; and

Whereas, the federal funding available for Utah's CHIP is indispensable to providing health benefits for children of modest means: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Legislature of the state of Utah urges the state's congressional delegation to work with the United States Congress to reauthorize the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) in a timely manner to ensure federal funding for CHIP in Utah. Be it further

Resolved, That the Legislature urges the Governor to work with Utah's congressional delegation to ensure that CHIP is reauthorized in a timely manner. Be it further

Resolved, That the Legislature urges all components of state government to work together with educators, health care providers, social workers, and parents to ensure that all available public and private assistance for providing health benefits to uninsured children in Utah be used to the maximum extent possible. Be it further

Resolved, That the Legislature urges the Governor to ensure that children who qualify for Medicaid or Utah's CHIP are identified and enrolled. Be it further

Resolved, That copies of this resolution be sent to Governor Huntsman, the Utah Department of Health, the United States Department of Health and Human Services, and to the members of Utah's congressional delegation.

POM–161. A concurrent resolution adopted by the Legislature of the State of Utah urging support for Taiwan's participation in the World Health Organization; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 4

Whereas, the World Health Organization's (WHO) Constitution states that ''The objective of the World Health Organization shall be the attainment by all peoples of the highest possible level of health'';

Whereas, this position demonstrates that the WHO is obligated to reach all peoples throughout the world, regardless of state or national boundaries;

Whereas, the WHO Constitution permits a wide variety of entities, including nonmember states, international organizations, national organizations, and nongovernmental organizations, to participate in the activities of the WHO;

Whereas, five entities, for example, have acquired the status of observer of the World Health Assembly (WHA) and are routinely invited to its assemblies;

Whereas, both the WHO Constitution and the International Covenant of Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights declare that health is an essential element of human rights and that no signatory shall impede on the health rights of others;

Whereas, Taiwan seeks to be invited to participate in the work of the WHA simply as an observer, instead of as a full member, in order to allow the work of the WHO to proceed without creating political frictions and to demonstrate Taiwan's willingness to put aside political controversies for the common good of global health;

Whereas, this request is fundamentally based on professional health grounds and has nothing to do with the political issues of sovereignty and statehood;

Whereas, Taiwan currently participates as a full member in organizations like the World Trade Organization, Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, and several other international organizations that count the People's Republic of China among their membership;

Whereas, Taiwan has become an asset to all these institutions because of a flexible interpretation of the terms of membership;

Whereas, closing the gap between the WHO and Taiwan is an urgent global health imperative;

Whereas, the health administration of Taiwan is the only competent body possessing and managing all the information on any outbreak in Taiwan of epidemics that could potentially threaten global health;

Whereas, excluding Taiwan from the WHO's Global Outbreak Alert and Response, Network, for example, is dangerous and self defeating from a professional perspective;

Whereas, good health is a basic right for every citizen of the world and access to the highest standard of health information and services is necessary to help guarantee this right;

Whereas, direct and unobstructed participation in international health cooperation forums and programs is therefore crucial, especially with today's greater potential for the cross-border spread of various infectious diseases through increased trade and travel;

Whereas, the WHO sets forth in the first chapter of its charter the objectives of attaining the highest possible level of health for all people;

Whereas, Taiwan's population of 23 million people is larger than that of three quarters of the member states already in the WHO and shares the noble goals of the organization;

Whereas, Taiwan's achievements in the field of health are substantial, including one of the highest life expectancy levels in Asia, maternal and infant mortality rates comparable to those in western countries, the eradication of such infectious diseases as cholera, smallpox, and the plague, and the first country in the world to provide children with free hepatitis B vaccinations;

Whereas, Taiwan is not allowed to participate in any WHO-organized forums and workshops concerning the latest technologies in the diagnosis, monitoring, and control of diseases;

Whereas, in recent years, both the Taiwanese Government and individual Taiwanese experts have expressed a willingness to assist financially or technically in WHO-supported international aid and health activities, but have ultimately been unable to render assistance;

Whereas, the WHO does allow observers to participate in the activities of the organization; and

Whereas, in light of all the benefits that participation could bring to the state of health of people not only in Taiwan, but also regionally and globally, it seems appropriate, if not imperative, for Taiwan to be involved with the WHO: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Legislature of the state of Utah, the Governor concurring therein, urges the Bush Administration to support Taiwan and its 23 million people in obtaining appropriate and meaningful participation in the World Health Organization. Be it further resolved that the Legislature and the Governor urges that United States' policy should include the pursuit of some initiative in the World Health Organization which would give Taiwan meaningful participation in a manner that is consistent with the organization's requirements. Be it further

Resolved, That a copy of this resolution be sent to the President of the United States, the United States Secretary of State, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, the majority leader of the United States Senate, the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives, the members of Utah's congressional delegation, the Government of Taiwan, and the World Health Organization.

POM–162. A resolution adopted by the Senate of the State of Louisiana commending

Congress for passing the Federal Minimum Wage Act of 2007; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 61

Whereas, the United States Congress passed the Fair Minimum Wage Act of 2007 (Minimum Wage Act) by an overwhelming vote by both Republicans and Democrats; and

Whereas, the President of the United States signed the Minimum Wage Act into law on May 27, 2007, as part of the U.S. Troop Readiness Veterans Care, Katrina Recovery and Iraq Accountability Appropriations Act; and

Whereas, the new law amends the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 and gradually raises the federal minimum wage from $5.15 per hour to $7.25 per hour over a two year period; and

Whereas, the Minimum Wage Act was a component of the new Democratic majority's 100–Hour Plan in the United States House of Representatives; and

Whereas, as part of the new law, $4.8 billion worth of tax breaks are going to be given to small businesses over a ten year period to offset the wage increase; and

Whereas, the Minimum Wage Act is the first national minimum wage increase in over a decade and provides a wage boost for 12.5 million workers nationwide. Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby commend President George W. Bush and the Congress of the United States for passing the Federal Minimum Wage Act of 2007. Be it further

Resolved, That a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the President of the United States, the secretary of the United States Senate, and the clerk of the United States House of Representatives.

POM–163. A resolution adopted by the House of Representatives of the State of Pennsylvania urging Congress to enact improvements to the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 345

Whereas NCLB, reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), was signed into law on January 8, 2002; and

Whereas, NCLB significantly increased the Federal Government's role in elementary and secondary education; and

Whereas, NCLB represented the most sweeping changes in Federal education policy in 30 years; and

Whereas, the House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania supports the goals of raising student achievement, closing achievement gaps and ensuring that each child has a qualified teacher; and

Whereas, NCLB, while establishing a rigorous standard for our nation's public schools and a model for assessing school achievement, has produced unintended consequences; and

Whereas, school districts in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania have incurred additional costs under NCLB for staff development, certification requirements, testing, data collection, public school choice-related transportation, supplemental education services and other school improvement programs; and

Whereas, NCLB has resulted in overreliance on standardized testing to the exclusion of other recognized indicators of student achievement; and

Whereas, NCLB mandates have prevented teachers and paraprofessionals from delivering a comprehensive curriculum; and

Whereas, the present adequate yearly progress (AYP) structure under NCLB is flawed, resulting in a high AYP failure rate; and

Whereas, smaller class sizes and community/parent involvement are proven methods of increasing student achievement; and

Whereas, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's certification process requires individuals to meet high standards and complete a rigorous, thorough course of study; and

Whereas, federal funding for NCLB Title I (Improving the Academic Achievement of the Disadvantaged) between 2002 and 2005 fell $21.4 billion short of statutorily authorized levels. Therefore be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives of the commonwealth of Pennsylvania urge the Congress to enact NCLB improvements including:

State-level development of a research-based school accountability formula incorporating district-level assessments, school-level assessments, performance or portfolio assessments, high school graduation rates and percentage of students participating in dual enrollment or honors, Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate courses.

(2) Support systems instead of sanctions: increased Federal funding for enhanced Federal and State technical assistance and Federal and State improvement plan assistance.

(3) Differentiated outcomes for schools, with targeted improvement plans for specific subgroups of students.

(4) Transparent growth models, at the State level, with data used exclusively for instructional, curricular and professional development purposes.

(5) Valid, reliable assessments for each child that accurately and fairly reflect student, school and school district performance.

(6) Flexibility relating to test scores of students with disabilities and English Language Learner students: allowing IEP teams to determine appropriate assessment and standards for each child, removing the 1% and 2% limits for alternative assessments and extending to three years the AYP inclusion of test scores of English Language Learner students for whom native language assessments in required core content subjects are not available.

(7) Restoration of the Class Size Reduction program in place prior to NCLB, whose goals were to provide an optimum class size of 15 students and to foster parent and community involvement by funding initiatives such as adult and family literacy, parenting classes and community engagement programs.

(8) Defining ''highly qualified teacher'' as any educator who is teaching in his or her assigned area of certification and who has met the licensure/certification requirements set forth in his or her respective state.

(9) Full funding of all NCLB programs at authorized levels; and be it further

Resolved, That copies of this resolution be transmitted to the Secretary of Education, to the presiding officers of each house of Congress and to each member of Congress from Pennsylvania.

POM–164. A resolution adopted by the House of Representatives of the State of Utah urging Congress to suspend or repeal the REAL ID Act; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 2

Whereas the implementation of the REAL ID Act intrudes upon the states' sovereign power to determine their own policies for identification, licensure, and credentialing of individuals residing therein;

Whereas one page of the 428 page 9/11 Commission report that did not give consideration to identification issues, prompted Congress to pass the legislation which created the REAL ID Act, ignoring states' sovereignty and their right to self-governance;

Whereas the REAL ID Act converts the state driver licensing function into federal law enforcement and national security functions that are outside the purpose and core competency of driver licensing bureaus;

Whereas the REAL ID Act constitutes an unfunded mandate by the federal government to the states;

Whereas the REAL ID Act requires states to confirm their processes of issuing driver licenses and identification cards to federal standards by May 2008;

Whereas the National Governor's Association, National Conference of State Legislatures, and American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators predict state compliance with the REAL ID Act provisions will require all of the estimated 245 million current driver license and identification card holders in the United States to renew their current identity documents in person by producing three or four identity documents, thereby increasing processing time and doubling wait time at licensing centers;

Whereas identification-based security provides only limited security benefits because it can be avoided by defrauding or corrupting card issuers and because it gives no protection against people not already known to be planning or committing wrongful acts;

Whereas the REAL ID Act will cost the states over $11 billion to implement according to a recent survey of 47 state licensing authorities conducted by the National Governor's Association, the National Conference of State Legislatures, and the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators;

Whereas the use of identification-based security cannot be justified as part of a ''layered'' security system if the costs of the identification ''layer''—in dollars, lost privacy, and lost liberty—are greater than the security identification provides;

Whereas the ''common machine-readable technology'' required by the REAL ID Act would convert state-issued driver licenses and identification cards into tracking devices, allowing computers to note and record people's whereabouts each time they are identified;

Whereas a more secure and flexible system of verifying identity may be achieved by less intrusive means to the individual and to states by employing the free market and private sector ingenuity;

Whereas the requirement that states maintain databases of information about their citizens and residents and then share this personal information with all other states will expose every state to the information security weaknesses of every other state and threaten the privacy of every American;

Whereas the REAL ID Act wrongly coerces states into doing the federal government's bidding by threatening to refuse noncomplying states' citizens the privileges and immunities enjoyed by other states' citizens;

Whereas the REAL ID Act threatens the privacy and liberty of those individuals belonging to unpopular or minority groups, including racial and cultural organizations, firearm owners and collectors, faith-based and religious affiliates, political parties, and social movements;

Whereas Congress passed the REAL ID Act without a single hearing in either house and without an up-or-down vote in either house;

Whereas the REAL ID Act thus imposes a national identification system through the states, premised upon the threat to national security, but without the benefit of public debate and discourse; and

Whereas the REAL ID Act is determined by the Utah State House of Representatives to be in opposition to the Jeffersonian principles of individual liberty, free markets,

and limited government: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Utah House of Representatives urges the United States Congress and the United States Department of Homeland Security to suspend implementation of the REAL ID Act; and be it further

Resolved, That the REAL ID Act should be repealed outright by the United States Congress to avoid the significant problems it currently poses to state sovereignty, individual liberty, and limited government; and be it further

Resolved, That a copy of this resolution be sent to the Majority Leader of the United States Senate, the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives, and the members of Utah's congressional delegation.

POM–165. A joint resolution adopted by the Legislature of the State of Tennessee opposing the implementation of the REAL 10 Act of 2005; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 248

Whereas the State of Tennessee recognizes the Constitution of the United States as our charter of liberty and the Bill of Rights as affirming the fundamental and inalienable rights of Americans, including freedom of privacy and freedom from unreasonable searches; and

Whereas the people of Tennessee recognize that the Constitution of the State of Tennessee affords even greater privacy rights for her citizens than those provided by the Constitution of the United States; and

Whereas Tennessee has a diverse population whose contributions are vital to the state's economy, culture and civic character; and

Whereas Tennessee is proud of her tradition of protecting the civil rights and liberties of all her residents, affirming the fundamental rights of all people, and providing more expansive protections than are granted by the Constitution of the United States; and

Whereas the federal REAL 1D Act of 2005, Public Law 109–12, creates a national identification card by mandating federal standards for state driver's licenses and identification cards and requires states to share their motor vehicle databases; and

Whereas the REAL ID Act mandates the documents that states must require to issue driver's licenses and requires states to place uniform information on every driver's license in a standard, machine-readable format; and

Whereas the REAL ID Act prohibits federal agencies and federally regulated commercial aircraft from accepting a driver's license or identification card issued by a state that has not fully complied with the act; and

Whereas the REAL ID Act places a costly, unfunded mandate on states, with initial estimates for Tennessee of more than one hundred million dollars, plus the additional burden of millions of taxpayers' dollars in ongoing annual expenses, and a national estimate of more than eleven billion dollars over the five years following its implementation; and

Whereas the REAL ID Act requires the creation of a massive public sector database containing information on every American that is accessible to all motor vehicle employees and law enforcement officers nationwide and that can be used to gather and manage information on citizens. Such activities are not the business or responsibility of government; and

Whereas the REAL ID Act enables the creation of additional massive private sector databases, combining both transactional information and driver's license information gained from scanning the machine-readable information contained on every driver's license; and

Whereas these public and private databases are likely to contain numerous errors and false information, creating significant hardship for Americans attempting to verify their identities in order to travel on commercial aircraft, open a bank account, or perform any of the numerous functions required to live in the United States today; and

Whereas the Federal Trade Commission estimates that ten million Americans are victims of identify theft annually, and because identity thieves are increasingly targeting motor vehicle departments, the REAL ID Act will enable the crime of identity theft by making the personal information of all Americans, including date of birth and signature, accessible from tens of thousands of locations; and

Whereas the REAL ID Act requires a driver's license to contain a person's actual home address and makes no exception for individuals in potential danger, such as undercover law enforcement personnel or victims of stalking or criminal harassment; and

Whereas the REAL ID Act contains onerous record verification and retention provisions that place unreasonable burdens on state motor vehicle divisions and on third parties required to verify records; and

Whereas the REAL ID Act will place enormous burdens on citizens seeking new driver's licenses, such as longer lines, increased document requests, higher costs, and a waiting period; and

Whereas the REAL ID Act will place state motor vehicle staff on the front lines of immigration enforcement by forcing state employees to determine federal citizenship and immigration status, excessively burdening both foreign-born applicants and motor vehicle staff; and

Whereas the REAL ID Act passed without sufficient deliberation by Congress and did not receive a hearing by any congressional committee or a vote solely on its own merits, despite opposition from more than six hundred organizations; and

Whereas the REAL ID Act eliminated a process of negotiated rulemaking initiated under the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004, which had convened federal, state and local policymakers, privacy advocates, and industry experts to solve the problem of the misuse of identity documents; and

Whereas the REAL ID Act provides little security benefit and leaves identification systems open to insider fraud, counterfeit documentation, and database failures; Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, By the Senate of the one hundred fifth General Assembly of the State of Tennessee, the House of Representatives concurring, that we support the government of the United States in its campaign to secure our country, while affirming the commitment that this campaign not be waged at the expense of the essential rights and liberties of the citizens of this country, nor by placing the added burden of a costly mandate upon the taxpayers of each state; and be it further

Resolved, That it is the policy of the State of Tennessee to oppose any portion of the REAL ID Act that violates the rights and liberties guaranteed under the constitutions of the State of Tennessee and the United States, including the Declaration of Rights and the Bill of Rights; and be it further

Resolved, That the Tennessee General Assembly urges the Tennessee congressional delegation to support measures to repeal the REAL ID Act; and be it further

Resolved, That there be no implementation of the REAL ID Act of 2005, unless and until funding for the additional cost associated with same is furnished by the United States government; and be it further

Resolved, That the Chief Clerk of the Senate be hereby authorized and directed to forward a certified copy of this resolution to the President of the United States, George W. Bush, the United States Attorney General, Alberto Gonzales, the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives of Congress, and the congressional delegation representing the State of Tennessee in the Congress of the United States.

POM–166. A resolution adopted by the House of Representatives of the State of Michigan urging the approval of the placement of a statue of President Gerald R. Ford in the United States Capitol; to the Committee on Rules and Administration.

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 148

Whereas each state is permitted to have two statues of prominent citizens on display in our nation's capitol as part of the National Statuary Hall Collection, which was created by federal law in 1864. This collection is a strong reminder of the heritage we share and the exceptional men and women who have helped shape our nation. Michigan's two statues are of Lewis Cass and Zachariah Chandler, leaders who played pivotal roles in the history of our state and nation; and

Whereas the federal law governing the National Statuary Hall Collection also provides a procedure for states to replace an existing statue with a new one. This reflects the continuing growth and development of our country. With the recent passing of Gerald R. Ford, Michigan's only president and a man who devoted his entire life to the service of our state and nation, the people of Michigan wish to acknowledge this native son and commence the process of placing a statue of him in the National Statuary Hall Collection; and

Whereas under the established guidelines, the legislature must adopt a resolution to express formally its support for the statue of the person to be honored and to request the Joint Committee on the Library of Congress to approve the placement of the statue. The governor must also express support; and

Whereas under the procedures that govern the replacement of a statue in the collection, the resolution requesting the Joint Committee on the Library of Congress must identify the entity that will select the sculptor and pay for all aspects of the process; and

Whereas relocating the statue of Zachariah Chandler to Michigan would allow many more Michigan citizens, including young people, to learn more of the life of this exceptional man and his contributions to our state; and

Whereas Gerald Ford's life of honesty, integrity, and service constitutes one of Michigan's most important contributions to our nation. As a veteran of World War II and Grand Rapids congressman for a quarter century, Gerald Ford, a man of abiding principle and a strong sense of duty, came to the highest office in our land under most difficult circumstances. As the 38th president, Gerald Ford took the oath of office as our country faced a crisis in confidence. Acting with little regard for political expediency, President Ford helped the country heal through his own honesty and trustworthiness. These qualities, long known by the people of Grand Rapids and his colleagues in Congress, left a legacy that stands strong; and

Whereas the Gerald R. Ford Foundation is committed to the effort to add an image of President Ford to the National Statuary Hall Collection. The Gerald R. Ford Foundation has agreed to serve as the body selecting a sculptor and to fund all of the costs associated with the placement of the new statue and the relocation of the statue of Zachariah Chandler to Michigan; Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives, That we request the Joint Committee on the Library of Congress to approve the placement of a statue of President Gerald R. Ford as part of the National Statuary Hall Collection in the United States Capitol and to authorize the removal of the statue of Zachariah Chandler and its relocation to Michigan; and be it further

Resolved, That copies of this resolution be transmitted to the President of the United States Senate, the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives, the Joint Committee on the Library of Congress, the members of the Michigan congressional delegation, the Office of the Governor, and the Gerald R. Ford Foundation.

POM–167. A resolution adopted by the House of Representatives of the State of Michigan urging Congress to enact legislation to improve the health programs available to veterans; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 53

Whereas, providing medical care for the men and women who risk their lives in defense of our nation is a most important responsibility. While this is always true, the significance of this task should be eminently clear as our armed forces are engaged in battle; and

Whereas, funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs is determined each year by the Congress as part of discretionary spending. This budget is seriously under funded each year. This chronic under funding has a direct impact on the level of services available to our injured veterans. Currently, nearly 90 percent of federal health care spending is carried out through direct, rather than discretionary funding; and

Whereas, the Department of Veterans Affairs has the nation's largest health care system, with more than 150 hospitals, hundreds of clinics, nursing homes, residential rehabilitation treatment programs, and specialized services to deal with the most horrific and widest range of injuries. Recent rises in demand for health care services have far outpaced spending; and

Whereas, the American people owe our returning veterans proper health care services to address the injuries they sustain in defense of our freedoms. Quality health care for those injured in service to the country should not be subject to the annual fluctuations of a budget process that is often held hostage to politics. Clearly, the care of our wounded must be a top priority; Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, By the House of Representatives, That we memorialize the Congress of the United States to enact legislation to increase funding for veterans health programs and to reform budget practices to assure that veterans health care needs are addressed by direct rather than discretionary funding; and be it further

Resolved, That copies of this resolution be transmitted to the President of the United States Senate, the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives, and the members of the Michigan congressional delegation.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

The following bills and joint resolutions were introduced, read the first and second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

By Mr. ROBERTS (for himself and Mr. BROWNBACK):

S. 1772. A bill to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 127 South Elm Street in Gardner, Kansas, as the ''Private First Class Shane R. Austin Post Office''; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

By Ms. SNOWE:

S. 1773. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to regulate payroll tax deposit agents; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mrs. BOXER:

S. 1774. A bill to designate the John Krebs Wilderness in the State of California, to add certain land to the Sequoia-Kings Canyon National Park Wilderness, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

By Mr. BURR (for himself and Mr. GREGG):

S. 1775. A bill to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to ensure that no child is left behind; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. DURBIN (for himself and Mr. BROWN):

S. 1776. A bill to amend the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act to establish a user fee program to ensure food safety, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

By Mr. KENNEDY:

S. 1777. A bill to amend title II of the Public Health Service Act to restore the integrity to the office of the Surgeon General; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. LAUTENBERG (for himself, Mr. SMITH, and Mr. LOTT):

S. 1778. A bill to authorize certain activities of the Maritime Administration, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

By Mr. TESTER (for himself and Mr. DORGAN):

S. 1779. A bill to establish a program for tribal colleges and universities within the Department of Health and Human Services and to amend the Native American Programs Act of 1974 to authorize the provision of grants and cooperative agreements to tribal colleges and universities, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Indian Affairs.

By Mr. ROCKEFELLER (for himself, Mr. STEVENS, Mr. PRYOR, and Mr. INOUYE):

S. 1780. A bill to require the FCC, in enforcing its regulations concerning the broadcast of indecent programming, to maintain a policy that a single word or image may be considered indecent; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

By Mrs. BOXER (for herself and Mrs. FEINSTEIN):

S. 1781. A bill to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 118 Minner Avenue in Bakersfield, California, as the ''Buck Owens Post Office''; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

By Mr. FEINGOLD (for himself and Mr. DURBIN):

S. 1782. A bill to amend chapter 1 of title 9 of United States Code with respect to arbitration; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. ENZI:

S. 1783. A bill to provide 10 steps to transform health care in America; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. KERRY (for himself, Ms. SNOWE, Ms. CANTWELL, and Ms. LANDRIEU):

S. 1784. A bill to amend the Small Business Act to improve programs for veterans, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship.

By Mr. NELSON of Florida (for himself, Mrs. BOXER, Mr. LAUTENBERG, Mr. SANDERS, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Mr. MENENDEZ, and Mr. CARDIN):

S. 1785. A bill to amend the Clean Air Act to establish deadlines by which the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency shall issue a decision on whether to grant certain waivers of preemption under that Act; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

SUBMISSION OF CONCURRENT AND SENATE RESOLUTIONS

The following concurrent resolutions and Senate resolutions were read, and referred (or acted upon), as indicated:

By Mr. LAUTENBERG (for himself, Mr. CORNYN, Mr. HATCH, Mr. MENENDEZ, Mr. SPECTER, Mr. LEVIN, Mrs. CLINTON, Mr. OBAMA, Ms. MIKULSKI, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. BIDEN, Mrs. HUTCHISON, Mr. DODD, Mrs. BOXER, and Ms. LANDRIEU):

S. Res. 269. A resolution expressing the sense of the Senate that the Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee should recommend to the Postmaster General that a commemorative postage stamp be issued in honor of former United States Representative Barbara Jordan; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

By Mr. CONRAD (for himself and Mr. DORGAN):

S. Res. 270. A resolution honoring the 75th anniversary of the International Peace Garden; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 65

At the request of Mr. INHOFE, the name of the Senator from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 65, a bill to modify the age-60 standard for certain pilots and for other purposes.

S. 160

At the request of Mr. SPECTER, his name was added as a cosponsor of S. 160, a bill to provide for compensation to the Lower Brule and Crow Creek Sioux Tribes of South Dakota for damage to tribal land caused by Pick-Sloan projects along the Missouri River.

S. 185

At the request of Mr. SPECTER, the name of the Senator from Missouri (Mrs. MCCASKILL) was added as a cosponsor of S. 185, a bill to restore habeas corpus for those detained by the United States.

S. 309

At the request of Mr. SANDERS, the name of the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. KLOBUCHAR) was added as a cosponsor of S. 309, a bill to amend the Clean Air Act to reduce emissions of carbon dioxide, and for other purposes.

S. 456

At the request of Mrs. FEINSTEIN, the names of the Senator from Hawaii (Mr. AKAKA) and the Senator from Virginia (Mr. WEBB) were added as cosponsors of S. 456, a bill to increase and enhance law enforcement resources committed to investigation and prosecution of violent gangs, to deter and punish violent gang crime, to protect law-abiding citizens and communities from violent

criminals, to revise and enhance criminal penalties for violent crimes, to expand and improve gang prevention programs, and for other purposes.

S. 479

At the request of Mr. HARKIN, the name of the Senator from Delaware (Mr. BIDEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 479, a bill to reduce the incidence of suicide among veterans.

S. 551

At the request of Mr. ROBERTS, the name of the Senator from Nebraska (Mr. HAGEL) was added as a cosponsor of S. 551, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide a credit to certain agriculture-related businesses for the cost of protecting certain chemicals.

S. 617

At the request of Mr. SMITH, the name of the Senator from Colorado (Mr. SALAZAR) was added as a cosponsor of S. 617, a bill to make the National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Pass available at a discount to certain veterans.

S. 625

At the request of Mr. KENNEDY, the name of the Senator from Wisconsin (Mr. FEINGOLD) was added as a cosponsor of S. 625, a bill to protect the public health by providing the Food and Drug Administration with certain authority to regulate tobacco products.

S. 635

At the request of Mr. BAUCUS, the name of the Senator from Iowa (Mr. HARKIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 635, a bill to provide for a research program for remediation of closed methamphetamine production laboratories, and for other purposes.

S. 638

At the request of Mr. ROBERTS, the names of the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. INHOFE) and the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. CORKER) were added as cosponsors of S. 638, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide for collegiate housing and infrastructure grants.

S. 727

At the request of Mr. COCHRAN, the name of the Senator from Washington (Ms. CANTWELL) was added as a cosponsor of S. 727, a bill to improve and expand geographic literacy among kindergarten through grade 12 students in the United States by improving professional development programs for kindergarten through grade 12 teachers offered through institutions of higher education.

S. 771

At the request of Mr. HARKIN, the names of the Senator from Wisconsin (Mr. FEINGOLD) and the Senator from New York (Mrs. CLINTON) were added as cosponsors of S. 771, a bill to amend the Child Nutrition Act of 1966 to improve the nutrition and health of schoolchildren by updating the definition of ''food of minimal nutritional value'' to conform to current nutrition science and to protect the Federal investment in the national school lunch and breakfast programs.

S. 819

At the request of Mr. DORGAN, the name of the Senator from Virginia (Mr. WARNER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 819, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to expand tax-free distributions from individual retirement accounts for charitable purposes.

S. 836

At the request of Mr. LAUTENBERG, the names of the Senator from New York (Mr. SCHUMER) and the Senator from Nebraska (Mr. NELSON) were added as cosponsors of S. 836, a bill to amend the Federal Water Pollution Control Act to authorize appropriations for sewer overflow control grants.

S. 897

At the request of Ms. MIKULSKI, the name of the Senator from Arkansas (Mrs. LINCOLN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 897, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide more help to Alzheimer's disease caregivers.

S. 898

At the request of Ms. MIKULSKI, the name of the Senator from Arkansas (Mrs. LINCOLN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 898, a bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to fund breakthroughs in Alzheimer's disease research while providing more help to caregivers and increasing public education about prevention.

S. 903

At the request of Mr. DURBIN, the name of the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. DODD) was added as a cosponsor of S. 903, a bill to award a Congressional Gold Medal to Dr. Muhammad Yunus, in recognition of his contributions to the fight against global poverty.

S. 970

At the request of Mr. SMITH, the name of the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. PRYOR) was added as a cosponsor of S. 970, a bill to impose sanctions on Iran and on other countries for assisting Iran in developing a nuclear program, and for other purposes.

S. 1183

At the request of Mr. HARKIN, the name of the Senator from California (Mrs. FEINSTEIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1183, a bill to enhance and further research into paralysis and to improve rehabilitation and the quality of life for persons living with paralysis and other physical disabilities, and for other purposes.

S. 1239

At the request of Mr. ROCKEFELLER, the name of the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. LIEBERMAN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1239, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to extend the new markets tax credit through 2013, and for other purposes.

S. 1310

At the request of Mr. LOTT, the name of the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. COCHRAN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1310, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to provide for an extension of increased payments for ground ambulance services under the Medicare program.

S. 1353

At the request of Mr. WYDEN, the name of the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. DORGAN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1353, a bill to nullify the determinations of the Copyright Royalty Judges with respect to webcasting, to modify the basis for making such a determination, and for other purposes.

S. 1359

At the request of Mrs. MURRAY, the name of the Senator from Minnesota (Mr. COLEMAN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1359, a bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to enhance public and health professional awareness and understanding of lupus and to strengthen the Nation's research efforts to identify the causes and cure of lupus.

S. 1385

At the request of Mr. NELSON of Florida, the name of the Senator from Florida (Mr. MARTINEZ) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1385, a bill to designate the United States courthouse facility located at 301 North Miami Avenue, Miami, Florida, as the ''C. Clyde Atkins United States Courthouse''.

S. 1469

At the request of Mr. HARKIN, the name of the Senator from Missouri (Mrs. MCCASKILL) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1469, a bill to require the closure of the Department of Defense detention facility at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and for other purposes.

S. 1529

At the request of Mr. HARKIN, the name of the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. DODD) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1529, a bill to amend the Food Stamp Act of 1977 to end benefit erosion, support working families with child care expenses, encourage retirement and education savings, and for other purposes.

S. 1606

At the request of Mr. SPECTER, his name was added as a cosponsor of S. 1606, a bill to provide for the establishment of a comprehensive policy on the care and management of wounded warriors in order to facilitate and enhance their care, rehabilitation, physical evaluation, transition from care by the Department of Defense to care by the Department of Veterans Affairs, and transition from military service to civilian life, and for other purposes.

S. 1624

At the request of Mr. BAUCUS, the name of the Senator from Illinois (Mr. OBAMA) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1624, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide that the exception from the treatment of publicly traded partnerships as corporations for partnerships with passive-type income shall not apply to partnerships directly or indirectly deriving income from providing investment adviser and related asset management services.

S. 1742

At the request of Mr. THUNE, the name of the Senator from Wyoming (Mr. ENZI) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1742, a bill to prevent the Federal Communications Commission from repromulgating the fairness doctrine.

S. 1748

At the request of Mr. COLEMAN, the name of the Senator from Wyoming (Mr. ENZI) was added as a cosponsor of

S. 1748, a bill to prevent the Federal Communications Commission from repromulgating the fairness doctrine.

S. RES. 82

At the request of Mr. HAGEL, the name of the Senator from Kansas (Mr. ROBERTS) was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 82, a resolution designating August 16, 2007 as ''National Airborne Day''.

S. RES. 224

At the request of Mr. NELSON of Florida, his name was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 224, a resolution expressing the sense of the Senate regarding the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

AMENDMENT NO. 2019

At the request of Mr. LEVIN, the names of the Senator from Hawaii (Mr. AKAKA), the Senator from Virginia (Mr. WARNER), the Senator from Washington (Mrs. MURRAY), the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. GRAHAM), the Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. KENNEDY), the Senator from Alabama (Mr. SESSIONS), the Senator from West Virginia (Mr. ROCKEFELLER), the Senator from Maine (Ms. COLLINS), the Senator from West Virginia (Mr. BYRD), the Senator from Georgia (Mr. CHAMBLISS), the Senator from Illinois (Mr. OBAMA), the Senator from North Carolina (Mrs. DOLE), the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. LIEBERMAN), the Senator from Texas (Mr. CORNYN), the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS), the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. THUNE), the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. REED), the Senator from Florida (Mr. MARTINEZ), the Senator from Ohio (Mr. BROWN), the Senator from Florida (Mr. NELSON), the Senator from Montana (Mr. TESTER), the Senator from Nebraska (Mr. NELSON), the Senator from Indiana (Mr. BAYH), the Senator from New York (Mrs. CLINTON), the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. PRYOR), the Senator from Missouri (Mrs. MCCASKILL), the Senator from Michigan (Ms. STABENOW), the Senator from Iowa (Mr. HARKIN), the Senator from Missouri (Mr. BOND), the Senator from Georgia (Mr. ISAKSON), the Senator from Colorado (Mr. SALAZAR), the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. KLOBUCHAR), the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. WHITEHOUSE), the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. LOTT), the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. DODD), and the Senator from Texas (Mrs. HUTCHISON) were added as cosponsors of amendment No. 2019 proposed to H.R. 1585, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes.

At the request of Mr. COLEMAN, his name was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 2019 proposed to H.R. 1585, supra.

At the request of Mr. INHOFE, his name was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 2019 proposed to H.R. 1585, supra.

At the request of Ms. LANDRIEU, her name was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 2019 proposed to H.R. 1585, supra.

At the request of Mr. SPECTER, his name was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 2019 proposed to H.R. 1585, supra.

At the request of Mr. MENENDEZ, his name was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 2019 proposed to H.R. 1585, supra.

AMENDMENT NO. 2022

At the request of Mr. LEAHY, the name of the Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. KENNEDY) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 2022 intended to be proposed to H.R. 1585, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 2024

At the request of Mr. SESSIONS, the names of the Senator from Arizona (Mr. KYL), the Senator from North Carolina (Mrs. DOLE), the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. INHOFE) and the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. THUNE) were added as cosponsors of amendment No. 2024 proposed to H.R. 1585, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 2027

At the request of Mr. PRYOR, the name of the Senator from Arkansas (Mrs. LINCOLN) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 2027 intended to be proposed to H.R. 1585, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 2029

At the request of Mr. GREGG, the name of the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. LOTT) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 2029 intended to be proposed to H.R. 1585, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 2043

At the request of Mr. DURBIN, the name of the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. REED) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 2043 intended to be proposed to H.R. 1585, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 2046

At the request of Mrs. CLINTON, the names of the Senator from Montana (Mr. BAUCUS), the Senator from Maryland (Ms. MIKULSKI), the Senator from Arkansas (Mrs. LINCOLN) and the Senator from Delaware (Mr. BIDEN) were added as cosponsors of amendment No. 2046 intended to be proposed to H.R. 1585, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 2047

At the request of Mrs. CLINTON, the name of the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. LOTT) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 2047 intended to be proposed to H.R. 1585, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 2057

At the request of Mr. FEINGOLD, the names of the Senator from Georgia (Mr. ISAKSON) and the Senator from Florida (Mr. NELSON) were added as cosponsors of amendment No. 2057 intended to be proposed to H.R. 1585, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 2067

At the request of Mr. KENNEDY, the names of the Senator from Vermont (Mr. LEAHY), the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. SPECTER), the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. MENENDEZ), the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. DODD), the Senator from Maine (Ms. COLLINS), the Senator from Indiana (Mr. BAYH), the Senator from Colorado (Mr. SALAZAR), the Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. KERRY), the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. BINGAMAN), the Senator from Illinois (Mr. OBAMA), the Senator from New York (Mrs. CLINTON), the Senator from Maine (Ms. SNOWE), the Senator from Washington (Mrs. MURRAY) and the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. REED) were added as cosponsors of amendment No. 2067 intended to be proposed to H.R. 1585, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 2072

At the request of Mrs. LINCOLN, the name of the Senator from Arkansas

(Mr. PRYOR) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 2072 intended to be proposed to H.R. 1585, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 2086

At the request of Mr. LIEBERMAN, his name was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 2086 intended to be proposed to H.R. 1585, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 2100

At the request of Mr. CORNYN, the names of the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. COBURN) and the Senator from Missouri (Mr. BOND) were added as cosponsors of amendment No. 2100 proposed to H.R. 1585, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 2108

At the request of Mrs. CLINTON, the name of the Senator from Indiana (Mr. BAYH) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 2108 intended to be proposed to H.R. 1585, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 2125

At the request of Mr. SALAZAR, his name was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 2125 intended to be proposed to H.R. 1585, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes.

At the request of Mr. DURBIN, his name was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 2125 intended to be proposed to H.R. 1585, supra.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Ms. SNOWE:

S. 1773. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to regulate payroll tax deposit agents; to the Committee on Finance.

Ms. SNOWE. Mr. President, I rise today to introduce the Small Business Payroll Protection Act of 2007. This crucial legislation will protect small businesses from payroll tax fraud and provide them with greater security when working with IRS registered payroll service providers.

By way of background, let me say that in the fall of 2003, small businessman Roger Cyr, owner of the Lily Moon Cafe in Saco, Maine, learned that he was the victim of payroll tax fraud and that he owed $52,000 in back taxes. He was one of a number of small business owners in Maine who were forced to pay their payroll taxes twice after an unscrupulous payroll provider ran off with their tax deposits instead of making the required payments to the Internal Revenue Service.

Unfortunately, this type of payroll fraud is not unique to my State of Maine, with instances of malfeasance occurring in Georgia, Texas, Utah, Iowa, Maryland, New York, and elsewhere throughout the U.S. It is unconscionable that these small business owners, are required to pay their payroll taxes twice. This additional and unexpected expense can drive these companies out of business.

But let me be clear, these egregious examples of payroll fraud hide the fact that most small businesses use payroll providers that are honest, meticulous, and trustworthy. The majority of payroll tax agents pay their clients' taxes accurately, and on time, providing outstanding service as they help their clients with a myriad of complicated tax and accounting issues. Consequently, the organizing principle behind the bill I introduce today is to safeguard small business owners from afew dishonest payroll providers, and to shield the honest payroll providers from the bad actors in their industry.

To that end, this legislation contains a number of provisions designed to guard small business owners against fraud. These provisions include increasing IRS oversight of payroll service providers, creating a separate section of the Internal Revenue code that will govern the payroll industry, defining the responsibilities of payroll tax deposit agents, and requiring all agents to register with the IRS or be penalized. The bill also penalizes payroll providers that collect, but fail to make, required tax payments by extending section 6672 penalties to all payroll tax agents. Additionally, payroll clients will also be informed of their continued liability for all of their payroll taxes as well as their obligation to periodically verify that their payroll taxes are paid in full.

Now, I recognize that the new regulations will be more costly for small payroll companies to implement than for large payroll companies. In order to keep client protections in place, while providing small payroll services providers with some reasonable flexibility, the bill offers a choice. Payroll providers can either obtain a surety bond, or comply with quarterly third-party certifications.

Surety bonds can be very difficult for many small businesses to obtain. Consequently, instead of bonding, many small payroll service providers prefer the targeted quarterly certification option, which ensures that payroll agents are depositing clients' tax funds completely and on time. Small payroll agents assert that the certification process actually provides their clients with greater fraud protection than a surety bond because the certification verifies the payroll agent's sound financial practices quarterly, while a surety boud only requires an annual audit.

As Ranking Member of the Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship, I understand how critical it is to defend our small business owners from tax fraud. Enacting these provisions will help protect small companies in Maine, Utah, Georgia and in each of our states, from the very few dangerous payroll providers that would steal their clients' payroll taxes. At the same time, this bill recognizes that small payroll tax agents must be provided flexible and reasonable regulatory options that offer real protection to their clients. This legislation contains both strong safeguards and small business flexibility.

Mr. President, I urge my colleagues to help create a buffer for our small businesses from devious pay roll tax agents by increasing IRS oversight and protections as contained in this bill. I hope my colleagues will strongly support the Small Business Payroll Protection Act of 2007.

By Mr. BURR (for himself and Mr. GREGG):

S. 1775. A bill to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to ensure that no child is left behind; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

Mr. BURR. Mr. President, I rise today to speak on the No Child Left Behind Act of 2007, which I am pleased to introduce with my colleague Senator GREGG of New Hampshire. It has been an honor for my office to work with Senator GREGG, one of the ''Big 4'' architects of the original No Child Left Behind legislation that passed Congress with overwhelmingly bipartisan support and that was signed into law by President Bush in January 2002.

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2007 is the first comprehensive reauthorization legislation to be introduced in either the Senate or the House of Representatives. I hope our introduction today will kick-start the legislative process and get the Senate and the House on the path to a swift reauthorization of NCLB, the most sweeping and important federal K–12 education legislation passed since the original Elementary and Secondary Education Act was passed in 1965.

If ever there were a Federal law that needed to be reauthorized on time, it is No Child Left Behind. As the headline to Ron Brownstein's article in yesterday's Los Angeles Times read: ''Don't leave this law behind: Progress is slow

under Bush's 2001 education reform, but No Child Left Behind is worth improving.'' To be sure there has been lots of gnashing of teeth and grimacing in the K–12 field since NCLB was passed. But as many of us in Congress and across the country recognized when NCLB was passed in 2001, the point of No Child Left Behind wasn't, in the words of Kati Haycock of the Education Trust, ''to make people happy.''

If we had wanted to make the adult stakeholders in K–12 happy, we could have done nothing and just kept the status quo. However, in 2001 this Congress and a number of dedicated individuals and groups across this Nation decided the status quo for our children was not acceptable and that the time had come to eradicate, as President Bush called it, the ''soft bigotry of low expectations.'' Together with strong bipartisanship, this Congress with the passage of No Child Left Behind stated to all the adult stakeholders that we can and will close the achievement gap and to all of America's children that, regardless of background, socio-economics, race, ethnicity, or disability, you can and will learn and you can and will achieve.

We must not turn away from what we began when we passed the original No Child Left Behind legislation. The stakes are too high both for our children and the Nation as a whole. In the ever competitive global economy, all our children, not just some and not just the lucky or the fortunate, must be equipped with the academic skills to succeed. We cannot afford to return to the status quo of days past. The time is now to reauthorize No Child Left Behind and to reassert to all of America's children that this Congress will not give up on them and will not stop this endeavor until the too-long-standing achievement gap is closed once and for all and until all children have the academic skills they need to succeed in both postsecondary education and the workforce.

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2007 that Senator GREGG and I are introducing today does not abandon the basic tenets of No Child Left Behind. To be sure there is still a great deal of work to do to reach our Nation's goal of having all children proficient in reading and math by 2013–2014. Nevertheless, we are seeing historic increases in student achievement. Since the passage of NCLB, the United States has witnessed a greater increase in student achievement in the last five years than in the 30 previous years combined, as well as a significant narrowing in the achievement gap between African-American and Hispanic students and their Caucasian peers. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2007 builds on the original cornerstone laid by Congress in 2001 of holding schools accountable for the academic achievement of all their students and of empowering parents to make better choices for their child's education.

In particular, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2007 preserves the foundational principles of NCLB. It maintains the goal that all children will reach grade-level proficiency in reading in math by 2013–2014; keeps in place annual testing in grades 3–8 and at the high school level; and keeps in place an accountability system rooted in State standards and State assessments. Further, our bill does not water down accountability with the addition of multiple measures; rather, it keeps a laser-like focus on grade-level achievement in math and reading.

While maintaining the fundamentals of NCLB, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2007 rightly responds to legitimate concerns parents, teachers, and principals, have raised regarding the original legislation. In response to concerns raised about impracticable accountability timeframes, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2007 streamlines the accountability timeline to make it easier for schools to develop and implement plans to improve student achievement and to focus on what matters most teaching and learning. Additionally, recognizing that schools and their needs vary, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2007 allows for differentiated interventions for schools in restructuring to allow districts and schools to target resources to students and schools most in need of assistance. Further, in response to calls for the use of a growth model to measure individual student progress and to positively recognize schools and educators who are making tremendous strides in improving the achievement of all children, the bill expands the Department's seven State growth model demonstration to all 50 States.

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2007 also responds to legitimate concerns regarding the special populations of limited English proficient, LEP, students and students with disabilities, by providing greater flexibility, focus, and resources to help schools educate these students to high standards. Notably, the bill grants new flexibility for LEP students who are new to the country and codifies in statute recent flexibility granted by the Department of Education for special education students, which permits the use of alternate academic achievement standards for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities and modified academic achievement standards for students who have disabilities that preclude them from achieving grade-level proficiency. Finally, the bill targets Federal assessment dollars to develop and administer valid and reliable assessments for special education and LEP students and targets professional development dollars to empower teachers with better tools and information for teaching LEP and special education children.

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2007 reasserts that high-quality teachers are the most important factor to improved student academic achievement. The bill authorizes programs to ensure that all students are taught by a highly qualified teacher and to ensure that low-income and minority students are not taught by unqualified and inexperienced teachers at higher rates than their more affluent peers. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2007 maintains the current definition of highly qualified teacher; emphasizes alternative certification, incentive, differential, and performance and merit pay; and has States and districts conduct needs assessments to determine which districts and schools have the most acute teacher quality and staffing needs in order to better target resources to those schools and districts. Further, the bill gives greater authority to local school districts to renegotiate restrictions in collective bargaining agreements that contribute to the least experienced and qualified teachers teaching in the schools with students most in need of a highly qualified teacher.

Finally, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2007 focuses on improving the Nation's high school graduation rate. Included in the legislation is the Graduate for a Better Future Act, which I introduced earlier this year in response to the high school dropout crisis in the United States. The high school graduation rate for the class of 2003 was only 70 percent nationwide. Thus, almost one-third of American students who enter high school in ninth grade drop out of school and never receive a high school diploma. Large disparities exist in the high school graduation rates among various subgroups of students. Although the high school graduation rate for white students was 78 percent in 2003, the rate for African American students was only 55 percent, and the rate for Hispanic students was only 53 percent.

To remain competitive in the world economy, it is critical for America's youth to graduate from high school and to have access to the postsecondary education needed to succeed in the 21st century job market. Funds under the Graduate for a Better Future Act will be used to create models of excellence for academically rigorous high schools to prepare all students for college and the 21st century workplace; to implement accelerated academic catch-up programs for students who enter high school behind; to implement an early warning system to quickly identify students at risk of dropping out of high school; to implement comprehensive college guidance programs; and to implement programs that offer students opportunities for job-shadowing, internships, and community service so that students are able to make the connection between what they are learning in school and how that applies and is used in the workplace.

Additionally, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2007 requires states to get serious and to get accurate in their calculation of graduation rates. The Nation's dropout crisis will not go away

by fudging on the numbers. The graduation rate in the No Child Left Behind Act of 2007 builds on the work of all 50 states through the National Governors Association, which has signed the Graduation Counts Compact, an effort started in 2005 to find a common method for calculating each state's high school graduation rate.

As I stated at the beginning of my remarks, continuing our endeavor begun in 2001, the time is now to reauthorize No Child Left Behind. For the future of our Nation, our children, we must not turn back. Once again let us stand together and State to the American public that we can and will close the achievement gap. And once again let us say to every child, regardless of background, you can achieve.

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, since its implementation, the No Child Left Behind Act has been successful in narrowing the achievement gap and improving student performance. Since its passage, the U.S. has witnessed a greater increase in student achievement in the last 5 years than in the previous 30 years combined, as well as a significant narrowing in the achievement gap. Because of No Child Left Behind, parents are now empowered with information on the quality of their child's school and given the ability to improve their child's education through additional tutorial services.

No Child Left Behind has been tremendously successful in ensuring that all students have access to the same high academic standards. No longer can a school hide behind the averages of their higher performing students; now all students are given the same opportunities to reach academic proficiency. Today I am introducing the No Child Left Behind Act of 2007 with my colleague Mr. BURR. This bill builds upon the basic tenets of No Child Left Behind and rightly responds to the legitimate concerns of parents, teachers and principals. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2007 maintains the expectation that all students can reach or exceed proficiency when given the opportunity. Any rollback of accountability simply ignores the progress already being made and the belief that all students can reach proficiency when given the opportunity.

Recognizing that each school and its needs vary tremendously, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2007 allows for differentiated consequences to ensure that schools where a majority of students are not performing at grade-level are treated differently than schools where a small segment of the school population is not meeting State standards. Coupled with additional time before advancing into the next stage of Program Improvement, these new differentiated consequences will allow schools to target resources and interventions to the students who need the most assistance in reaching state-determined levels proficiency.

Under this bill, the Federal Government will continue to support States financially in their development, improvement, and administration of State academic assessments through the reauthorization of the Grants for State Assessments program. Additionally, because many States are still striving to improve their assessment systems to assess students with disabilities and limited English proficient students validly and reliably, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2007 creates a fund dedicated solely to the development and improvement of assessments for these students.

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2007 recognizes that high quality teachers are the most important factor to improved student academic achievement. The bill authorizes several programs to ensure that all students are taught by a highly-qualified teacher and to ensure that low-income students are not taught by unqualified and inexperienced teachers at higher rates than their more affluent peers. This bill authorizes the Teacher Incentive Fund, a program to encourage State and schools districts to expand performance-based compensation for teachers and principals in high-need schools who raise student achievement and close the achievement gap. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2007 also authorizes the Adjunct Teacher Corp, a program to encourage highly educated and trained professionals, particularly in the areas of math and science, to teach high school courses in their area of expertise.

One of the key cornerstones of No Child Left Behind, options for parents, is maintained and expanded in the No Child Left Behind Act of 2007. Notably, this bill makes supplemental services available at the same time as public school choice, expands the time period parents can enroll their children in tutorial services programs and makes it easier for supplemental service providers to readily access school facilities.

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2007 authorizes a new ''money follows the child'' program and provides financial assistance to districts that permit Title I dollars to follow the child to the public school of his or her choice. This child-centered program will infuse competition into the public school system, empower parents with new choices and encourage all public schools to improve the academic achievement of all students.

The combination of strengthening supplemental services and the new child-centered program will provide even greater resources for parents to ensure that the educational needs of their children are being met.

This bill maintains what we know is working, accountability, transparency and expanded options, without adding burdensome new requirements. By maintaining the fundamentals of No Child Left Behind, this bill combines maximum flexibility with differentiated consequences to ensure that all schools and students have the tools necessary to reach academic proficiency.

By Mr. DURBIN (for himself and Mr. BROWN):

S. 1776. A bill to amend the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act to establish a user fee program to ensure food safety, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I rise today to introduce legislation to strengthen the ability of the Food and Drug Administration, FDA, to ensure the safety of food imported into the U.S.

The volume of food imports has increased significantly in recent years, from $45.6 billion in 2003 to $64 billion in 2006. According to the USDA, imported food accounts for 13 percent of the average American's diet, including 31 percent of fruits, juices, and nuts; 9.5 percent of red meat; and 78.6 percent of fish and shellfish.

This upward trend in imported food has been accompanied by an increasing number of health and safety incidents related to imported food products. In the past 6 months, we have seen what appears to be the intentional contamination of wheat gluten and rice protein concentrate with melamine, which is an industrial product that should never find its way into food products. In addition, we recently learned that a significant volume of imported fish products from China have been contaminated with chemicals and residues, including Malachine green and Nitrofuren. We have found imported Chinese toothpaste in the U.S. that was contaminated with diethylene glycol, which is a toxic component used in antifreeze.

Unfortunately, the FDA currently lacks the resources and authority to adequately determine the quality and safety of food imports, inspect an adequate volume of imported food, and rapidly detect and respond to incidents of contaminated imports. This legislation would take several steps to correct these problems.

First, the bill would impose a fee for the FDA's oversight of imported food products. These fees would generate revenues to be used for inspections of imported food and critical food safety research. The legislation directs the FDA to use some of this funding to perform cutting-edge research to develop testing technologies and methods that would quickly and accurately detect the presence of pervasive contaminants such as E. coli and listeria. The legislation would also establish a food importer certification program that would require foreign firms and governments to demonstrate that their food safety systems are equivalent to ours.

What has been made clear through the pet food recall and other outbreaks of foodborne illnesses is that the FDA is a severely underfunded and understaffed agency. Much of the responsibility for overseeing and inspecting the safety of imported food rests with the

FDA. However, due to fairly flat budgets and increasing responsibilities, the number of inspectors looking at these shipments has actually decreased from more than 3,000 inspectors in 2003 to the present level of around 2,700 inspectors.

The Centers for Disease Control, CDC, estimates that 76 million Americans become sick from foodborne illnesses each year. More than 300,000 are hospitalized and 5,000 die each year. Less than 1.5 percent of imported food is inspected by the FDA and the FDA lacks the resources and authorities to certify the standards of our trading partners. This situation presents an economic, public health, and bioterrorism risk to the U.S.

The FDA office that is responsible for regulating more than $60 billion of imported food, the Center for Food Safety and Nutrition, CFSAN, is also responsible for regulating $417 billion worth of domestic food and $59 billion in cosmetics. All of this activity is regulated by an office for which the President requested $467 million in fiscal year 2008. Only $312 million of that amount would be for inspectors. We clearly need to review FDA's funding to make sure that it has the resources necessary to safeguard the 80 percent of our food supply that it is responsible for regulating. For this reason, a group of my colleagues and I sent a letter earlier this year to the Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee, which funds the FDA, asking for a significant increase in the level of funding for the FDA foods program.

But imports present a special challenge. It may cost more to ensure the safety of food produced in other countries, and the logistical challenges are greater. It is important that we supplement the FDA's budget with additional funding streams to make sure that it has the resources necessary to safeguard our food supply from contaminated imports.

Specifically this legislation would direct the FDA to collect a user fee on imported food products, for the administrative review, processing, and inspection costs borne by the FDA. The legislation would use that funding to bolster FDA's import inspection program, which currently inspects less than 1.5 percent of all imports. It would also fund critical research into rapid testing technologies for detecting foodborne pathogens.

Lastly, this bill would establish an imported food certification program. Today, any country and any company can export food products to the United States as long as they inform regulators of the shipment. No checks are performed to ensure that the producer has adequate sanitary standards. The FDA does not ensure that trading partners have equivalent regulatory systems or inspect overseas plants when problems arise.

When the FDA does want to investigate an outbreak, it can be delayed by uncooperative foreign governments. For example, during the pet food recall, U.S. regulators were delayed three weeks in their request for visas to inspect facilities.

This new program would mark a watershed change in the food import safety posture of the U.S. This bill says that if you want a slice of the lucrative U.S. market, you have to comply with the same common-sense standards that apply to U.S. food producers. You have to have equivalent food safety systems and processes in place to those of the U.S. You need to give U.S. regulators access to your facilities and records so they can check your safety record without unnecessary delay. In addition, U.S. regulators would have the power to revoke the certification of a company or country that fails to comply, and to detain products that fail to meet U.S. standards.

For too long, we have gone without a solid safety standard for imported foods. Instead, our regulators jump from alert to alert and recall to recall. This legislation would close these loopholes that allow dangerous imports into our country and put a solid, proactive system in place to protect our food supply.

I ask unanimous consent that the text of the bill be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the text of the bill was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

S. 1776

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; FINDINGS.

(a) SHORT TITLE.—This Act may be cited as the ''Imported Food Security Act of 2007''.

(b) FINDINGS.—Congress finds that—

(1) the safety and integrity of the United States food supply is vital to the public health, to public confidence in the food supply, and to the success of the food sector of the Nation's economy;

(2) illnesses and deaths of individuals and companion pets caused by contaminated food—

(A) have contributed to a loss of public confidence in food safety; and

(B) have caused significant economic loses to manufactures and producers not responsible for contaminated food items;

(3) the task of preserving the safety of the food supply of the United States faces tremendous pressures with regard to—

(A) emerging pathogens and other contaminants and the ability to detect all forms of contamination; and

(B) an increasing volume of imported food, without adequate monitoring and inspection;

(4) the United States is increasing the amount of food that it imports such that—

(A) from 2003 to the present, the value of food imports has increased from $45,600,000,000 to $64,000,000,000; and

(B) imported food accounts for 13 percent of the average Americans diet including 31 percent of fruits, juices, and nuts, 9.5 percent of red meat and 78.6 percent of fish and shellfish; and

(5) the number of full time equivalent Food and Drug Administration employees conducting inspections has decreased from 2003 to 2007.

SEC. 2. USER FEES REGARDING INSPECTIONS OF IMPORTED FOOD SAFETY.

Chapter VIII of the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act (21 U.S.C. 381 et seq.) is amended by inserting after section 801 the following:

''USER FEES REGARDING FOOD SAFETY

''SEC. 801A. (a) IN GENERAL.—

''(1) ASSESSMENT.—Beginning in fiscal year 2008, the Secretary shall in accordance with this section assess and collect fees on food imported into the United States.

''(2) PURPOSE OF FEES.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—The purpose of fees under paragraph (1) is to defray the costs of carrying out section 801 with respect to food. Costs referred to in the preceding sentence include increases in such costs for an additional number of full-time equivalent positions in the Department of Health and Human Services to be engaged in carrying out such section.

''(B) ALLOCATIONS BY SECRETARY.—Of the total fee revenues collected under paragraph (1) for a fiscal year, the Secretary shall reserve and expend amounts in accordance with the following:

''(i) The Secretary shall reserve not less than 50 percent for carrying out section 801 with respect to food, other than research under section 801(p). In expending the amount so reserved, the Secretary shall give first priority to inspections conducted at ports of entry into the United States and second priority to the implementation of the import certification program under section 805.

''(ii) The Secretary shall reserve not more than 50 percent for carrying out research under section 801(p).

''(3) AMOUNT OF FEE; COLLECTION.—A fee under paragraph (1) shall be assessed on each line item of food, as defined by the Secretary by regulation. The amount of the fee shall be based on the number of line items, and may not exceed $20 per line item, notwithstanding subsection (b). The liability for the fee constitutes a personal debt due to the United States, and such liability accrues on the date on which the Secretary approves the food under section 801(c)(1). The Secretary may coordinate with and seek the cooperation of other agencies of the Federal Government regarding the collection of such fees.

''(b) TOTAL FEE REVENUES.—The total fee revenues collected under subsection (a) for a fiscal year shall be the amount appropriated under subsection (f)(3).

''(c) ANNUAL FEE ADJUSTMENT.—Not later than 60 days after the end of each fiscal year beginning after fiscal year 2008, the Secretary, subject to not exceeding the maximum fee amount specified in subsection (a)(3), shall adjust the amounts that otherwise would under subsection (a) be assessed as fees during the fiscal year in which the adjustment occurs so that the total revenues collected in such fees for such fiscal year equal the amount applicable pursuant to subsection (b) for the fiscal year.

''(d) FEE WAIVER OR REDUCTION.—The Secretary shall grant a waiver from or a reduction of a fee assessed under subsection (a) where the Secretary finds that the fee to be paid will exceed the anticipated present and future costs incurred by the Secretary in carrying out section 801 with respect to food (which finding may be made by the Secretary using standard costs).

''(e) ASSESSMENT OF FEES.—

''(1) LIMITATION.—Fees may not be assessed under subsection (a) for a fiscal year beginning after fiscal year 2008 unless the amount appropriated for salaries and expenses of the Food and Drug Administration for such fiscal year is equal to or greater than the amount appropriated for salaries and expenses of the Food and Drug Administration

for fiscal year 2008 multiplied by the adjustment factor applicable to the fiscal year involved, except that in making determinations under this paragraph for the fiscal years involved there shall be excluded—

''(A) the amounts appropriated under subsection (f)(3) for the fiscal years involved; and

''(B) the amounts appropriated under section 736(g) for such fiscal years.

''(2) AUTHORITY.—If the Secretary does not assess fees under subsection (a) during any portion of a fiscal year because of paragraph (1) and if at a later date in such fiscal year the Secretary may assess such fees, the Secretary may assess and collect such fees, without any modification in the rate of the fees, at any time in such fiscal year notwithstanding the provisions of subsection (a)(3) relating to the time at which fees are to be paid.

''(f) CREDITING AND AVAILABILITY OF FEES.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—Fees collected for a fiscal year pursuant to subsection (a) shall be credited to the appropriation account for salaries and expenses of the Food and Drug Administration and shall be available in accordance with appropriation Acts until expended without fiscal year limitation. Such sums as may be necessary may be transferred from the Food and Drug Administration salaries and expenses appropriation account without fiscal year limitation to such appropriation account for salaries and expenses with such fiscal year limitation. The sums transferred shall be available solely for carrying out section 801 with respect to food, and the sums are subject to allocations under subsection (a)(2)(B).

''(2) COLLECTIONS AND APPROPRIATION ACTS.—The fees authorized in subsection (a)—

''(A) shall be collected in each fiscal year in accordance with subsections (a)(3) and (b); and

''(B) shall only be collected and available for the purpose specified in subsection (a)(2).

''(3) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS; ALLOCATIONS BY SECRETARY.—Subject to paragraph (4), there is authorized to be appropriated for fees under this section such sums as may be necessary to carry out the purposes of this section for each of the fiscal years 2008 through 2012. Such appropriated funds may be in addition to any other funds appropriated for such purposes.

''(4) OFFSET.—Any amount of fees collected for a fiscal year under subsection (a) that exceeds the amount of fees specified in appropriation Acts for such fiscal year shall be credited to the appropriation account of the Food and Drug Administration as provided in paragraph (1), and shall be subtracted from the amount of fees that would otherwise be authorized to be collected under this section pursuant to appropriation Acts for a subsequent fiscal year.

''(g) COLLECTION OF UNPAID FEES.—In any case where the Secretary does not receive payment of a fee assessed under subsection (a) within 30 days after it is due, such fee shall be treated as a claim of the United States Government subject to subchapter II of chapter 37 of title 31, United States Code.

''(h) CONSTRUCTION.—This section may not be construed as requiring that the number of full-time equivalent positions in the Department of Health and Human Services, for officers, employees, and advisory committees not engaged in carrying out section 801 with respect to food be reduced to offset the number of officers, employees, and advisory committees so engaged.

''(i) DEFINITION OF ADJUSTMENT FACTOR.—For purposes of this section, the term 'adjustment factor' applicable to a fiscal year is the Consumer Price Index for all urban consumers (all items; United States city average) for April of the preceding fiscal year divided by such Index for April 2007.''.

SEC. 3. RESEARCH ON TESTING TECHNIQUES FOR FOOD SAFETY INSPECTIONS OF IMPORTED FOOD; PRIORITY REGARDING DETECTION OF INTENTIONAL ADULTERATION.

Section 801 of the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act (21 U.S.C. 381) is amended by adding at the end the following:

''(p) RESEARCH ON TESTING TECHNIQUES FOR FOOD SAFETY INSPECTIONS OF IMPORTED FOOD.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall (directly or through grants or contracts) provide for research on the development of tests and sampling methodologies, for use in inspections of food under this section—

''(A) whose purpose is to determine whether food is adulterated by reason of being contaminated with microorganisms or pesticide chemicals or related residues; and

''(B) whose results are available not later than approximately 60 minutes after the administration of the tests.

''(2) PRIORITY.—In providing for research under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall give priority to conducting research on the development of tests that are suitable for inspections of food at ports of entry into the United States. In providing for research under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall under the preceding sentence give priority to conducting research on the development of tests for detecting the presence in food of the pathogens E. coli, salmonella, cyclospora, cryptosporidium, hepatitis A, or listeria, the presence in or on food of pesticide chemicals and related residues, and the presence in or on food of such other pathogens or substances as the Secretary determines to be appropriate. The Secretary shall establish the goal of developing, by the expiration of the 3-year period beginning on the date of the enactment of the Imported Food Security Act of 2007, tests under paragraph (1) for each of the pathogens and substances receiving priority under the preceding sentence.

''(3) PERIODIC REPORTS.—The Secretary shall submit to Congress periodic reports describing the progress that has been made toward the goal referred to in paragraph (1) and describing plans for future research toward the goal. Each of the reports shall provide an estimate by the Secretary of the amount of funds needed to meet such goal, and shall provide a determination by the Secretary of whether there is a need for further research under this subsection. The first such report shall be submitted not later than March 1, 2008, and subsequent reports shall be submitted semiannually after the submission of the first report until the goal is met.

''(4) CONSULTATION.—The Secretary shall carry out the program of research under paragraph (1) in consultation with the Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Director of the National Institutes of Health, and the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency. The Secretary shall with respect to such research coordinate the activities of the Department of Health and Human Services. The Secretary shall in addition consult with the Secretary of Agriculture (acting through the Food Safety and Inspection Service of the Department of Agriculture) in carrying out the program.

''(5) AWARDS TO PRIVATE ENTITIES.—Of the amounts reserved under section 801A(a)(2)(B)(ii) for a fiscal year for carrying out the program of research under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall make available not less than 50 percent for making awards of grants or contracts to private entities to conduct such research.''.

SEC. 4. CERTIFICATION OF FOOD IMPORTS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Chapter VIII of the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act (21 U.S.C. 381 et seq.) is amended by adding at the end the following:

''SEC. 805. CERTIFICATION OF FOOD IMPORTS.

''(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 2 years after the date of enactment of this section, the Secretary shall establish a system under which a foreign government or foreign food establishment seeking to import food to the United States shall submit a request for certification to the Secretary.

''(b) CERTIFICATION STANDARD.—A foreign government or foreign food establishment requesting a certification to import food to the United States shall demonstrate, in a manner determined appropriate by the Secretary, that food produced under the supervision of a foreign government or by the foreign food establishment has met standards for food safety, inspection, labeling, and consumer protection that are at least equivalent to standards applicable to food produced in the United States.

''(c) CERTIFICATION APPROVAL.—

''(1) REQUEST BY FOREIGN GOVERNMENT.—Prior to granting the certification request of a foreign government, the Secretary shall review, audit, and certify the food safety program of a requesting foreign government (including all statutes, regulations, and inspection authority) as at least equivalent to the food safety program in the United States, as demonstrated by the foreign government.

''(2) REQUEST BY FOREIGN FOOD ESTABLISHMENT.—Prior to granting the certification request of a foreign food establishment, the Secretary shall certify, based on an onsite inspection, the food safety programs and procedures of a requesting foreign firm as at least equivalent to the food safety programs and procedures of the United States.

''(d) LIMITATION.—A foreign government or foreign firm approved by the Secretary to import food to the United States under this section shall be certified to export only the approved food products to the United States for a period not to exceed 5 years.

''(e) WITHDRAWAL OF CERTIFICATION.—The Secretary may withdraw certification of any food from a foreign government or foreign firm—

''(1) if such food is linked to an outbreak of human illness;

''(2) following an investigation by the Secretary that finds that the foreign government programs and procedures or foreign food establishment is no longer equivalent to the food safety programs and procedures in the United States; or

''(3) following a refusal to allow United States officials to conduct such audits and investigations as may be necessary to fulfill the requirements under this section.

''(f) RENEWAL OF CERTIFICATION.—The Secretary shall audit foreign governments and foreign food establishments at least every 5 years to ensure the continued compliance with the standards set forth in this section.

''(g) REQUIRED ROUTINE INSPECTION.—The Secretary shall routinely inspect food and food animals (via a physical examination) before it enters the United States to ensure that it is—

''(1) safe;

''(2) labeled as required for food produced in the United States; and

''(3) otherwise meets requirements under this Act.

''(h) ENFORCEMENT.—The Secretary is authorized to—

''(1) deny importation of food from any foreign government that does not permit United States officials to enter the foreign country to conduct such audits and inspections as may be necessary to fulfill the requirements under this section;

''(2) deny importation of food from any foreign government or foreign firm that does not consent to an investigation by the Secretary when food from that foreign country or foreign firm is linked to a food-borne illness outbreak or is otherwise found to be adulterated or mislabeled; and

''(3) promulgate rules and regulations to carry out the purposes of this section, including setting terms and conditions for the destruction of products that fail to meet the standards of this Act.

''(i) DETENTION AND SEIZURE.—Any food imported for consumption in the United States may be detained, seized, or condemned pursuant to section 304.

''(j) DEFINITION.—For purposes of this section, the term 'food establishment'—

''(1) means a slaughterhouse, factory, warehouse, or facility owned or operated by a person located in any State that processes food or a facility that holds, stores, or transports food or food ingredients; and

''(2) does not include a farm, restaurant, other retail food establishment, nonprofit food establishment in which food is prepared for or served directly to the consumer, or fishing vessel (other than a fishing vessel engaged in processing, as that term is defined in section 123.3 of title 21, Code of Federal Regulations).''.

(b) TRANSITIONAL PROGRAM.—Not later than 180 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Health and Human Services shall promulgate regulations to establish a transitional food safety import review program, with minimal disruption to commerce, that shall be in effect until the date of implementation of the food import certification program under section 805 of the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act (as added by subsection (a)).

By Mr. TESTER (for himself and Mr. DORGAN):

S. 1779. A bill to establish a program for tribal colleges and universities within the Department of Health and Human Services and to amend the Native American Programs Act of 1974 to authorize the provision of grants and cooperative agreements to tribal colleges and universities, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Indian Affairs.

Mr. TESTER. Mr. President, Indian Education is perhaps the most important issue facing Indian Country today because education represents hope. Higher education leads to better job opportunities. Better jobs lead to higher income and happier days. Higher income leads to greater access to health care and adequate housing and overall, a higher quality of life. Higher quality of life leads to strong communities. Happy, healthy, and strong communities are more resistant to the destructive forces of poverty such as chemical abuse, violence and neglect.

No one disagrees that 85 percent unemployment in Indian Country is unacceptable. No one disagrees that it is unacceptable that the majority of America's at-risk youth live in Indian Country. However, merely reciting these statistics over and over won't make the situation any better. We need to work together to make Indian Country a better place to live, work and raise a family.

Senator DORGAN and I introduce this vital legislation to help advance the remarkable work tribal colleges and universities are doing. Through grants awarded under this bill, tribal colleges and universities will have additional resources necessary to strengthen Indian communities through the provision of health promotion and disease prevention education, outreach and workforce development programs, through program implementation, research, and capacity building. Not only will it improve education, but it will also improve the delivery of culturally appropriate health care services. In addition to good education and increased access to health care, this bill will also help create good jobs in Indian Country.

Tribal colleges and universities are accredited by independent, regional accreditation agencies, and like all institutions of higher education, must undergo stringent performance reviews to retain their accreditation status. In addition to offering postsecondary education opportunities, tribal colleges serve reservation communities by providing critical services including: libraries, community centers, cultural, historical and language programs; tribal archives, career centers, economic development and business centers; health and wellness centers, public meeting places, child and elder care centers. Despite their many obligations, functions, and notable achievements, tribal colleges remain the most poorly funded institutions of higher education in this country.

The continued success and future of the Nation's tribal colleges and universities depends on their ability to provide higher education and community outreach programs. For them to succeed however, they must have the financial resources to do so. I am honored to rise today to introduce this important legislation for improving conditions in America's Indian Country. I am proud of the folks who came together to help craft the bill and am proud to cosponsor it with my friend, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, Senator DORGAN.

I am proud to serve on the Indian Affairs Committee and to work to improve conditions in Indian Country.

For example, on April 5th, I held a Tribal College Summit at the Blackfeet Community College in Browning, the first of its kind.

Leaders of all the Tribal nations in Montana and leaders throughout Indian higher education met to brainstorm about how we can improve tribal colleges in the State of Montana and across the country. By the end of the day, each group pledged to take specific actions to improve tribal college education throughout the U.S.

Part of my pledge includes introducing this PATH legislation. By training more Indian students to enter the health care field, we will provide Indian country with more educated and self-sufficient members and improve the quality of and access to healthcare in Indian Country.

Healthier communities and good-paying jobs lead to improved overall conditions in Indian Country.

As a Montanan and member of the Senate Indian Affairs Community, I am proud to introduce this legislation. I look forward to swift consideration and eventual passage.

By Mrs. BOXER (for herself and Mrs. FEINSTEIN):

S. 1781. A bill to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 118 Minner Avenue in Bakersfield, California, as the ''Buck Owens Post Office''; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, today I am joined by my colleague, Senator FEINSTEIN, to introduce legislation to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 118 Minner Avenue in Bakersfield, California, as the Buck Owens Post Office.

Country western legend, Buck Owens was one of the pioneers of the ''Bakersfield Sound,'' that brought the raw edge of electric guitars and a rock and roll beat to country music. A great musician and a generous man, Buck left behind a legacy of artistry and love for his adopted hometown of Bakersfield and California's Central Valley.

The son of a sharecropper, Buck was born Alvis Edgar Owens, Jr. in Sherman, TX, in 1929. At an early age, he nicknamed himself ''Buck'' after a mule on the family farm. In 1937, the Owens family moved west seeking better fortune during the Great Depression. When he was just 13 years old, Buck dropped out of school to find work, but he never stopped pursuing his passion for music.

A natural musician, Buck taught himself to play guitar in his early teens. When he was just 16, he had already landed a regular show on a local radio station and was playing shows in honky tonks and bars around Phoenix. Just 6 years later, Buck moved his young family to Bakersfield, California, where he began to make his mark on country music as a performer, a songwriter, and a recording artist.

Buck's trademark stinging electric guitar and rhythm sound revolutionized country music and challenged the Nashville establishment. His 20 number-one hits are a testament to his place among the greatest artists in country music history. Throughout his decades as an entertainer, Buck delighted audiences from Bakersfield to Nashville, all the way to Japan and even the White House.

Buck's pioneering work has continued to inspire a new generation of musicians. In 1986, when Buck had finished a 25-year run as the cohost of the Hee Haw television show, Dwight Yoakam and other new traditional performers were just beginning a revival of his hallmark Bakersfield Sound.

I was fortunate to have met Buck back in 1997 at his Crystal Palace in Bakersfield, when I was invited to

present one of his special red, white, and blue guitars to a promising music student named William Villatoro. I still vividly remember how the young man was deeply moved and inspired by Buck's generous gesture. I will certainly remember Buck Owens as a man of great compassion who possessed a profound love for his country. Although he is no longer with us, I take great comfort in knowing that Buck Owens was able to be a shining light not only in the life of a young man from Bakersfield but also to the millions of others who admired his musical gifts and were touched by his humanity.

I encourage my colleagues to join me in support of this legislation as we commemorate an icon of American music whose artistry and generosity touched so many lives in his community.

By Mr. FEINGOLD (for himself and Mr. DURBIN):

S. 1782. A bill to amend chapter 1 of title 9 of United States Code with respect to arbitration; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, today I will introduce the Arbitration Fairness Act of 2007. Just as its name suggests, the Arbitration Fairness Act is designed to return fairness to the arbitration system. This bill is not an anti-arbitration bill. If anything, it is pro-arbitration. I firmly believe that this bill will strengthen the arbitration system by returning arbitration to a more equitable design that reflects the intent of the original arbitration legislation, the Federal Arbitration Act.

President Calvin Coolidge signed the Federal Arbitration Act, FAA, into law on February 12, 1925. Congress passed the FAA to make arbitration an enforceable alternative to the civil courts. Even as early as the 1920s, there were concerns about the efficiency of the civil court system and a desire to allow a speedier alternative. The intent of the FAA, as expressed in a 1923 hearing before a subcommittee of the Senate Judiciary Committee, was ''to enable business men to settle their disputes expeditiously and economically.'' In a later hearing on the FAA, it was clarified that the legislation was not intended to apply to the employment contracts of those businesses. This distinction is important because it illustrates that, while arbitration was something that the FAA's original sponsors wanted to promote, they were also careful to make clear that they didn't intend for arbitration to become a weapon to be wielded by the powerful against those with less financial and negotiating power.

Since the FAA's enactment, the use of arbitration has grown exponentially. Arbitration certainly has advantages. It can be a fair and efficient way to settle disputes. I strongly support voluntary, alternative dispute resolution methods, and I believe we ought to encourage their use. But I also believe that arbitration is a fair way to settle disputes between consumers and lenders only when it is entered into knowingly and voluntarily by both parties to the dispute after the dispute has arisen. Otherwise arbitration can be used as a weapon by the stronger party against the weaker party.

One of the most fundamental principles of our justice system is the constitutional right to take a dispute to court. Indeed, all Americans have the right in civil and criminal cases to a trial by jury. The right to a jury trial in civil cases in Federal court is contained in the Seventh Amendment to the Constitution. Many States provide a similar right to a jury trial in civil matters filed in State court.

I have been concerned for many years that mandatory arbitration clauses are slowly eroding the legal protections that should be available to all Americans. A large and growing number of corporations now require millions of consumers and employees to sign contracts that include mandatory arbitration clauses. Most of these individuals have little or no meaningful opportunity to negotiate the terms of their contracts and so find themselves having to choose either to accept a mandatory arbitration clause or to forgo securing employment or needed goods and services. Incredibly, mandatory arbitration clauses have been used to prevent individuals from trying to vindicate their civil rights under statutes specifically passed by Congress to protect them.

There is a range of ways in which mandatory arbitration can be particularly hostile to individuals attempting to assert their rights. For example, the administrative fees, both to gain access to the arbitration forum and to pay for the ongoing services of the arbitrator or arbitrator, can be so high as to act as a de facto bar for many individuals who have a claim that requires resolution. In addition, arbitration generally lacks discovery proceedings and other civil due process protections.

Furthermore, there is no meaningful judicial review of arbitrators' decisions. Under mandatory, binding arbitration, even if a party believes that the arbitrator did not consider all the facts or follow the law, the party cannot file a suit in court. The only basis for challenging a binding arbitration decision is fairly narrow: if there is reason to believe that the arbitrator committed actual fraud, or was biased, corrupt, or guilty of misconduct, or exceeded his or her powers. Because mandatory, binding arbitration is so conclusive, it is a credible means of dispute resolution only when all parties understand the full ramifications of agreeing to it.

Unfortunately, in a variety of contexts, employment agreements, credit card agreements, HMO contracts, securities broker contracts, and other consumer and franchise agreements, mandatory arbitration is fast becoming the rule, rather than the exception. The practice of forcing employees to use arbitration has been on the rise since the Supreme Court's Circuit City decision in 2001. Unless Congress acts, the protections it has provided through law for American workers, investors, and consumers, will slowly become irrelevant.

The Arbitration Fairness Act of 2007, which I am happy to say will also be introduced in the House by Representative HANK JOHNSON, D–GA, reinstates the FAA's original intent by requiring that agreements to arbitrate employment, consumer, franchise, or civil rights disputes be made after the dispute has arisen. The act does not apply to mandatory arbitration systems agreed to in collective bargaining, and it does not prohibit arbitration. What it does do is prevent a party with greater bargaining power from forcing individuals into arbitration through a contractual provision. It will ensure that citizens once again have a true choice between arbitration and the traditional civil court system.

In our system of Government, Congress and State legislatures pass laws and the courts are available to citizens to make sure those laws are enforced. But the rule of law means little if the only forum available to those who believe they have been wronged is an alternative, unaccountable system where the law passed by the legislature does not necessarily apply. This legislation both protects Americans from exploitation and strengthens a valuable alternative method of dispute resolution. These are both worthy ends, and I hope that my colleagues in the Senate will join me in working to pass this important bill.

I ask unanimous consent that the text of the bill and a section-by-section analysis be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

S. 1782

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''Arbitration Fairness Act of 2007''.

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

The Congress finds the following:

(1) The Federal Arbitration Act (now enacted as chapter 1 of title 9 of the United States Code) was intended to apply to disputes between commercial entities of generally similar sophistication and bargaining power.

(2) A series of United States Supreme Court decisions have changed the meaning of the Act so that it now extends to disputes between parties of greatly disparate economic power, such as consumer disputes and employment disputes. As a result, a large and rapidly growing number of corporations are requiring millions of consumers and employees to give up their right to have disputes resolved by a judge or jury, and instead submit their claims to binding arbitration.

(3) Most consumers and employees have little or no meaningful option whether to submit their claims to arbitration. Few people

realize, or understand the importance of the deliberately fine print that strips them of rights; and because entire industries are adopting these clauses, people increasingly have no choice but to accept them. They must often give up their rights as a condition of having a job, getting necessary medical care, buying a car, opening a bank account, getting a credit card, and the like. Often times, they are not even aware that they have given up their rights.

(4) Private arbitration companies are sometimes under great pressure to devise systems that favor the corporate repeat players who decide whether those companies will receive their lucrative business.

(5) Mandatory arbitration undermines the development of public law for civil rights and consumer rights, because there is no meaningful judicial review of arbitrators' decisions. With the knowledge that their rulings will not be seriously examined by a court applying current law, arbitrators enjoy near complete freedom to ignore the law and even their own rules.

(6) Mandatory arbitration is a poor system for protecting civil rights and consumer rights because it is not transparent. While the American civil justice system features publicly accountable decision makers who generally issue written decisions that are widely available to the public, arbitration offers none of these features.

(7) Many corporations add to their arbitration clauses unfair provisions that deliberately tilt the systems against individuals, including provisions that strip individuals of substantive statutory rights, ban class actions, and force people to arbitrate their claims hundreds of miles from their homes. While some courts have been protective of individuals, too many courts have upheld even egregiously unfair mandatory arbitration clauses in deference to a supposed Federal policy favoring arbitration over the constitutional rights of individuals.

SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.

Section 1 of title 9, United States Code, is amended—

(1) by amending the heading to read as follows:

"§ 1. Definitions";

(2) by inserting before "'Maritime'" the following:

"As used in this chapter—";

(3) by striking "'Maritime transactions'" and inserting the following:

"(1) 'maritime transactions';";

(4) by striking "commerce" and inserting the following:

"(2) 'commerce'";

(5) by striking ", but nothing" and all that follows through the period at the end, and inserting a semicolon; and

(6) by adding at the end the following:

"(3) 'employment dispute', as herein defined, means a dispute between an employer and employee arising out of the relationship of employer and employee as defined by the Fair Labor Standards Act;

"(4) 'consumer dispute', as herein defined, means a dispute between a person other than an organization who seeks or acquires real or personal property, services, money, or credit for personal, family, or household purposes and the seller or provider of such property, services, money, or credit;

"(5) 'franchise dispute', as herein defined, means a dispute between a franchisor and franchisee arising out of or relating to contract or agreement by which—

"(A) a franchisee is granted the right to engage in the business of offering, selling, or distributing goods or services under a marketing plan or system prescribed in substantial part by a franchisor;

"(B) the operation of the franchisee's business pursuant to such plan or system is substantially associated with the franchisor's trademark, service mark, trade name, logotype, advertising, or other commercial symbol designating the franchisor or its affiliate; and

"(C) the franchisee is required to pay, directly or indirectly, a franchise fee; and

"(6) 'pre-dispute arbitration agreement', as herein defined, means any agreement to arbitrate disputes that had not yet arisen at the time of the making of the agreement.".

SEC. 4. VALIDITY AND ENFORCEABILITY.

Section 2 of title 9, United States Code, is amended—

(1) by amending the heading to read as follows:

"§ 2. Validity and enforceability",

(2) by inserting "(a)" before "A written";

(3) by striking ", save" and all that follows through "contract", and inserting "to the same extent as contracts generally, except as otherwise provided in this title"; and

(4) by adding at the end the following:

"(b) No predispute arbitration agreement shall be valid or enforceable if it requires arbitration of—

"(1) an employment, consumer, or franchise dispute; or

"(2) a dispute arising under any statute intended to protect civil rights or to regulate contracts or transactions between parties of unequal bargaining power.

"(c) An issue as to whether this chapter applies to an arbitration agreement shall be determined by Federal law. Except as otherwise provided in this chapter, the validity or enforceability of an agreement to arbitrate shall be determined by the court, rather than the arbitrator, irrespective of whether the party resisting arbitration challenges the arbitration agreement specifically or in conjunction with other terms of the contract containing such agreement.

"(d) Nothing in this chapter shall apply to any arbitration provision in a collective bargaining agreement.".

SEC. 5. EFFECTIVE DATE.

This Act, and the amendments made by this Act, shall take effect on the date of the enactment of this Act and shall apply with respect to any dispute or claim that arises on or after such date.

SECTION-BY-SECTION ANALYSIS

When Congress enacted the Federal Arbitration Act ("FAA"), its goal was to allow an alternative forum for parties on equal footing to resolve their disputes. Yet a series of court decisions moved the law away from its original intent and opened the door for arbitration to be used to deprive ordinary citizens in employment, consumer, and franchise disputes of their constitutional right to use the civil justice system.

The Arbitration Fairness Act of 2007, introduced in the Senate by Sen. Russ Feingold (D–WI) and in the House by Rep. Hank Johnson (D–GA), reflects the FAA's original intent by requiring that agreements to arbitrate employment, consumer, franchise, or civil rights disputes be made after the dispute has arisen. The Act does not prohibit arbitration, but it will prevent a party with greater bargaining power from forcing individuals into arbitration through a contract entered into prior to a dispute arising. It will ensure that citizens have a true choice between arbitration and the traditional civil court system.

Sec. 1: Short Title: the "Arbitration Fairness Act of 2007"

Sec. 2: Findings: This section details how the law has moved away from the original intent of the Federal Arbitration Act and has now exposed growing numbers of individual consumers and employees to mandatory arbitration agreements. It also discusses the ways in which mandatory arbitration systems are skewed in favor of powerful, corporate, repeat players.

Sec. 3: Definitions: This section amends section 1 of the FAA (9 U.S.C. §1) to include specific definitions of "employment dispute," "consumer dispute," and "franchise dispute," which are covered by the Act. An employment dispute is any dispute between an employer and employee arising out of the relationship as defined by the Fair Labor Standards Act. A consumer dispute is a dispute between an individual person who seeks or acquires property, services, money, or credit for non-business purposes and the seller or provider of those goods or services. A franchise dispute is a dispute between a franchisor and franchisee arising out of or relating to the contract establishing the franchise.

Sec. 4: Validity and Enforceability: This section amends section 2 of the FAA (9 U.S.C. §2) to establish that agreements to arbitrate employment, consumer, or franchise disputes will not be enforceable if they are entered before the actual dispute arises. It extends this rule to disputes arising under civil rights statutes and statutes regulating contracts or transactions between parties of unequal bargaining power. This section also states that disputes as to whether the Act applies shall be resolved by the court, rather than through arbitration. Finally, the section clarifies that the Act does not apply to collective bargaining agreements.

Sec. 5: Effective Date: The Act shall apply to claims and disputes arising on or after the date of enactment.

By Mr. ENZI:

S. 1783. A bill to provide 10 steps to transform health care in America; to the Committee on Finance.

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I rise for the purpose of introducing a bill on health care reform. I know the Presiding Officer has immense interest in it, as do a number of other Senators. I have read his bill and incorporated many parts of that.

Health care reform is one of the biggest needs in this country. It is the fastest escalating price in this country. It is the biggest cost to companies and individuals in this country. We need to have a solution.

I have been working with Senator KENNEDY, who is the chairman of the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee. He has a very full plate with the Higher Education Act, the higher education reconciliation, information technology, and I could go on to mention about 53 bills we are working on in that committee. So I have had some latitude as ranking member to try to pull together some information—some legislation that would deal with health care for this Nation. This is a work in progress. This is not a finished document.

I wish to thank Senator KENNEDY for working with me and his staff and my staff to come up with some health care principles we wanted to follow. Of course, I appreciate the work Senator NELSON did with me in previous times and currently on small business health plans. I appreciate Senator BAUCUS's efforts on health care and how the tax

package goes together with that. We can see there are a lot of moving parts to anything we do with health. Senator COBURN has an outstanding and very comprehensive package on how we can solve many of the health care and health insurance problems in this Nation. Senator LOTT, Senator DEMINT, Senator MCCONNELL; as I mentioned, the Presiding Officer, Senator WHITEHOUSE; Senator LINCOLN, Senator CARPER, Senator SALAZAR, and Senator DURBIN—these are all people who have come up with either a comprehensive plan or a piece of a plan that would work to make an important difference in health care in this country.

Congressman McCreary on the House side has been a real leader on this and, of course, the President and the administration have made contributions as well. The President, in his State of the Union speech, made some comments about how taxes would fit in with solving some of the uninsured problems in the country, and some of those provisions are in here as well.

Without the work of everyone on this, it can't be done. If it gets polarized, it can't be done. This is something which has to be done in a very bipartisan way. I hope we have a framework from which we can all operate, making changes, finding third ways.

I work on an 80-percent rule. I anticipate and from experience have found that usually everybody can agree on 80 percent of the issues, and among the 80 percent of the issues on which they agree, they can agree on 80 percent of any one of those issues. You never get a perfect bill around here. If you can get 80 percent, you can get a lot done. That is what we are trying to do on health care—make an 80-percent change for the people of America. Eighty percent would be a huge difference and will help out a lot of people.

So I rise today to talk about an issue that is literally a heartbeat away from devastating the lives of every American; that is, our current health care crisis. Undeniably, we have a problem. There are 46.1 million Americans, according to the last tabulation, who are uninsured. Now, we always talk about that figure and change it slightly differently because there are 7 million of those people who make over $80,000 a year and don't have insurance, so they must choose not to have insurance, but they are uninsured. People who are on Medicaid, they don't have to sign up for anything before they have an emergency. When they go to the hospital, they can sign up then. That is a significant number of the 46.1 million people as well. So I don't know whether to really say they don't have insurance, but at any rate, let's just use that figure of 46.1 million Americans who are uninsured and figure out a way to solve that, as well as to help people who also have insurance to perhaps be able to handle the situation even better.

Health care costs are outstripping inflation. They are increasing annually at three times the rate of the Consumer Price Index. It is little surprise that three out of every four Americans are concerned about health care—three out of four. I think probably, if you are talking to people, you would think the percentage was even higher than that.

Employer-provided health insurance is voluntary and in critical condition. Sixty percent of the country's employers offer insurance today, but that is down 9 percent from a few years ago. It is partly due to the fact that the cost of health insurance for companies has nearly doubled in the same amount of time. With employers expected to pay over $8,000 per employee versus $4,000 5 years ago, we have no choice but to stabilize the system and provide more options for businesses so they can continue to provide health care for their employees.

We must also provide real options—real options for those without employer-based health care. My own home State of Wyoming is hard-hit. On average, one in five Wyoming residents is uninsured, and more and more residents are losing the coverage they do have as the costs go up. It is largely due to the fact that much of Wyoming's economy is small business. Nearly 70 percent of Wyoming employers are small business. Actually, if you use the Federal definition of small business and you talk about companies headquartered in Wyoming, 100 percent of the companies are small business. We don't have a single one, according to the Federal definition, that is based in Wyoming. But nearly 70 percent of the employers find that it is nearly impossible to afford health care coverage for their employees.

Thankfully, I am not here today to talk about these problems; I am here to provide real solutions. Americans need and deserve real solutions to this crisis now, and they are counting on this body to work together to get that. The time has come to move beyond the rhetoric and principles to true comprehensive health care reform.

Congress could enact 10 major steps for health care reform. These 10 steps are the basis of the legislation I am introducing today, the Ten Steps to Transform Health Care in America, or simply ''Ten Steps.''

In putting together these 10 steps, I first wanted to understand the problem, and all the proposals others have been discussing help with that. I have studied those other proposals very carefully, and my colleagues will find that I have included many of the concepts of those other proposals in the 10 steps. I particularly wish to recognize again and thank Senator BAUCUS, Senator KENNEDY, Senator NELSON, Senator COBURN, Senator LOTT, Senator DEMINT, Senator MCCONNELL, Senator WHITEHOUSE, Senator LINCOLN, Senator CARPER, Senator SALAZAR, Senator DURBIN, Congressman MCCREARY, the President, the administration—all of them for their contributions, for their patience, and for their willingness to share their ideas.

However, to truly do this right, we have to move beyond the usual jurisdictional issues, beyond the usual reauthorizations of a single program at a time. We have to examine the whole health care system and together—together, we have to put forward a bold and comprehensive solution that addresses our health care crisis. That is what Ten Steps does. It is a comprehensive solution to a very big problem. It can be done in parts. It doesn't have to be done as one structure.

It needs to go through the committee process. I have pointed out several times that bills that don't go through the committee process usually don't make it through the process at all. They are good for making rhetoric, they are good for making points, they are sometimes good for advancing a principle, but they seldom ever make it to the President's desk for signature. So I know this will have to go through more than one committee. I know the jurisdictional issues between Health, Education, Labor and Pensions and the Finance Committees. I have no problem. We did the pensions bill last year, going through those same kinds of multiple committees and getting agreement from everybody, and that can be done on this issue as well—of course, as long as we don't polarize it.

So I want to reiterate again that this is not a final bill. One of the things we have done in the HELP Committee which has helped to move things along is to consider every bill a work in progress. At a lot of the committee meetings, when you have a markup, different amendments are presented and they are voted up or down, just like on the floor. Well, that doesn't result in a lot of compromise. So what we have done on the HELP Committee is use the markup process as an indication of problems and the level of intensity of those problems, and we have agreed to work through those problems even after the bill makes it through committee. As a result, it seldom makes it through committee unanimously, but it makes it through committee in a bipartisan way, and that encourages people to work together to find solutions. Sometimes it is one way or the other, but usually it is finding a third way to come up with a mechanism to do what we are trying to do. Once we can put away some of the old ''diving into the weeds'' things that have happened year after year, we are able to come up with something new and different that actually reaches the goal we have been trying to reach as we jumped into the weeds through the whole process.

So I want to remind everybody that it is a work in progress. We want more ideas. We want some of those third ways. But primarily, we want everybody to take a look at what is in here because it is a compilation of a number of people who have really taken a look at the situation.

So what does it do? These 10 steps—I will break them down into the actual 10 steps and go through each of them.

First, we eliminate unfair tax treatment of health insurance, which expands choices and coverage and gives all Americans more control over their health care.

Our current health insurance system is biased toward employer-based coverage—kind of due to a historical accident. The wage controls of World War II increased competition among employers for recruiting the best employees and incentivized employers to offer health benefits instead of what they couldn't do, which was increase wages. In 1954, Congress codified a provision declaring that such a contribution would not count as taxable income. This tax policy made it very favorable for individuals to get their health benefits through their employers and consequently has penalized individuals who get coverage through the individual market. So if you work for a big company—a tax break. If you don't—penalized.

The Joint Committee on Taxation estimated that moving this tax bias and a few related health care tax policies will save the Government $3.6 trillion over the next 10 years. Even around here, that is a lot of money. That is a lot of money which can and should be used to expand choices and access and give individuals more control over their health care. Ten Steps ensures that every American can benefit from this savings—whether they get their health care from their employer, from the individual insurance market or they decide they want to get off Medicaid and switch to private insurance.

Let me be clear. My goal is not to erode employer-based health insurance, given that the Ten Steps does not alter the way employers treat health insurance. Rather, I wish to provide more options for individuals who don't currently have insurance through their employer. Everyone should be treated equally.

Once the employee exclusion for health care insurance is eliminated, we must provide additional tax incentives for the purchase of health care insurance. Ten Steps is a hybrid approach, combining the standard deduction for health insurance with a tax subsidy for those who need it the most. That way, no particular population is adversely affected.

The second step of Ten Steps would increase affordable options for working families to purchase health insurance through a standard tax deduction. The national above-the-line standard deduction for health insurance will equal $15,000 for a family and $7,500 for an individual. I wish to also note the earned-income tax credit for taxpayers with qualifying children is held harmless—that is very important—so those receiving the earned-income tax credit will not be affected by these changes. Actually, they will be affected in a positive way.

For example, say Bob from Gillette, WY, has total compensation of $38,000, made up of $34,000 in wages and $4,000 in health insurance premiums paid by his employer. Because of the current unfair tax treatment of premiums, Bob's current taxable income is reduced to $34,000, which means he paid about $5,000 in taxes. To an accountant, this is all fascinating; for other people, I am not so sure.

Under the Ten Steps, which eliminates the exclusion of premiums from tax, Bob's total compensation and thus taxable income would be $38,000. By providing Bob with a $7,500 standard deduction for health insurance, his taxable income under this bill would be lowered to $30,500, which means he would pay about $4,000 in taxes. So Bob's total savings under this proposal is $1,000 a year.

The third step of Ten Steps is what makes this a hybrid approach. I couple the standard deduction with a refundable, advanceable, assignable tax-based subsidy. That is a mouthful, but it ensures that Americans receive this credit in a meaningful way that allows them to purchase real insurance coverage.

Given that everybody is not familiar with these terms, I will explain them. As a refundable credit, it benefits folks even if they don't have tax liability. They don't have to owe taxes in order to get it. This helps low-income individuals. Advanceable means the subsidy would be paid at the beginning of the year so individuals can use the funds to immediately purchase health insurance. If it wasn't advanceable, individuals would need to first pay for their health insurance and then get the money back at the end of the year to pay them back for that purchase. To encourage everyone to obtain health insurance right away, we should provide those funds upfront. Further, to ensure that the subsidy goes toward the purchase of health care insurance, it is also assignable—paid directly from the IRS to the insurance carrier that the individual chooses.

Ten Steps includes the tax subsidy equal to $5,000 for a family or $2,500 for an individual. The full subsidy amount is available to individuals at or below 100 percent of the Federal poverty level, which is $20,650 right now for a family of four. The subsidy is phased out between up to 300 percent of Federal poverty level, with individuals at 200 percent receiving half the subsidy and individuals at 301 percent receiving the standard deduction instead of the subsidy. I am sure everybody got that.

The fourth key step for health care reform is to provide market-based pooling to reduce growing health care costs and increase access not only for small businesses, unions and other kinds of organizations and their workers, members, and families. That is a change from anything I have done on pooling before, but it is a change that was requested by the other organizations and unions, as well as small business. Those of you who know me well recognize how central this would be to any health care reform proposal of mine.

While I have not yet introduced the small business health plan legislation from last year, I have not abandoned those key principles. Every day, emergency rooms treat more than 30,000 uninsured Americans who work for or depend on small businesses. That is at least 30,000 reasons why I will not abandon the concept. However, in the proposal I am introducing, I have addressed some of the criticisms of the bill, and I have offered what I believe are appropriate solutions.

For instance, while the earlier bill focused heavily on small businesses—and this one still does—it simply became clear that other organizations, including unions and churches, can benefit from better pooling options too. Therefore, under this bill, the umbrella of the pooling option has been expanded to include more kinds of organizations but with the same strong focus on consumer protections and State-based oversight.

Of course, a big elephant in the room was dealing with those who were misled to fear how the initial proposal dealt with insurance mandates. I hope those who were so vocal before will pause this time around. By incorporating what many have described as the Snowe amendment—which I am sure we would have passed at the time we were talking about that before—the legislation would require benefit mandate categories if a majority of the States required them. While I still have some concerns, I am comfortable with this compromise because the mandate requirement is coupled with something it needs to encourage pooling and that is a common definition of what that mandate means. We do it with the Federal insurance plan because definitions in all the States run a little bit different. If you are trying to do something comprehensively, it is pretty hard to figure out what each definition means, so there needs to be a way of streamlining it and coming up with a common definition for that mandate. I don't think people have a problem with that, especially since we do it with the Federal plan.

As I learned with the previous debate, mandates for many different services and items are not consistent from State to State. Thus, if we are to discuss requiring those, we should at least have a consistent definition of what those mandates require. We should not further complicate the pooling option with a multitude of definitions. We want to make insurance as simple as possible. I know that is kind of an oxymoron, I am sure, because I know nobody in America relishes having their insurance agent come over and spend an evening explaining the bill to them. But we want to have this little bit of streamlining so it is simpler and people will be able to understand it, to the degree that is possible with insurance.

While the next step is probably one of the most obvious ones, it is also one many have not yet discussed. Currently, HIPAA portability protections

are provided to group health plans. The protections provide assurances to consumers that insurers will deal with preexisting conditions fairly and provide coverage, even to small groups.

These protections have been a great help for individuals purchasing health care coverage in the group market. However, those consumer protections are not provided nearly as well to individuals who are purchasing in the individual market. Ten Steps blends the individual and group market to extend important HIPAA portability protections to the individual market so the insurance security can better move with you from job to job. It allows people to take that new opportunity and still be sure they will be covered, even if they have had some preexisting conditions.

The sixth step emphasizes preventive benefits and helps individuals with chronic diseases better manage their health. America should have health care, not sick care. Prevention, prevention, prevention. That makes a big difference in the cost.

We have all been discussing the need to do more to prevent disease, not just treat its symptoms. Even though I leave much to the markets to define some health insurance components, the one thing we must emphasize is the need for prevention. Any plan purchased with the tax subsidy must include basic preventive services and a medical self-management component.

This concept is modeled after a very successful program in Wyoming. In 2005, Wyoming EqualityCare, our Medicaid Program, began providing one-on-one case management for Medicaid participants with chronic illnesses, such as diabetes, asthma, depression or heart disease, to encourage better self-management of these conditions. The program provides educational information on self-management, as well as a nurse health coach who follows up with each patient to ensure they have what they need to take care of themselves.

In addition, EqualityCare provides a nursing hotline so all patients have a direct line to a health care provider when they are concerned about an illness. These programs targeting those with chronic illnesses were estimated to save nearly $13 million for the EqualityCare program in 2006. In a lot of States, that would not sound like a lot, but Wyoming is the least-populated of all of the States. We are hoping to get 500,000 people in the next census. When you talk about $13 million being saved in this EqualityCare Program dealing with Medicaid participants, it is a lot of money, proportionately, particularly because it cut down on inappropriate use of emergency room services.

Now, another key step of the Ten Steps for health care reform is to give individuals the choice to convert the value of their Medicaid and SCHIP program benefits into private health insurance, putting them in control of their health care, not the Federal Government. The rationale for this step is simple. If the market can provide better coverage at a lower price, why not allow Americans to access that care?

This gives low-income individuals more options about where they can receive their care and what care is available to them. Some providers don't see Medicaid and SCHIP patients. This provision will change that by letting the market forces work and give all patients more choices. It is time for people to start making decisions about their care. Let's get the Government out of the doctors office.

About 6,000 kids are enrolled in the Wyoming SCHIP program. An additional 6,000 kids are eligible for the program but are not enrolled. I wonder why that is. Maybe it is because folks in Wyoming are wary about accepting Government help, and they think there is a negative stigma associated with SCHIP and Medicaid. Well, under Ten Steps, they can use that money to purchase health care insurance through the private sector so that their family can attain the high quality care they need and deserve. This will cover more people.

The eighth step in Ten Steps is a bipartisan proposal which the HELP Committee approved last month—the ''Wired for Health Care Quality Act,'' which encouraged the adoption of cutting-edge information technologies in health care to improve patient care, reduce medical errors, and cut health care costs. Some of the most serious challenges facing health care today—medical errors, inconsistent quality, and rising costs—can be addressed through the effective application of available health information technology linking all elements of the health care system.

The widespread use of health IT can save lives. If somebody is traveling and gets in a car wreck or gets hurt in some other way, the emergency room doctor would be able to find out everything he or she needs to know to make the right treatment decisions, without the person having to fill out one of those little papers at the doctors office, which they may not be capable of doing if they have been in a requiem or have some other problem.

Better use of health IT would also allow medical data to move with people when they go to other locations. When someone goes to the doctor's office, they won't have to take the clipboard and a pencil and write down everything they can remember about their history. It will already be recorded and go with them. It will make a huge difference.

Beyond saving lives and saving time, more effective use of health information technology would save us a lot of money. A RAND study suggested that health IT has the potential to save—listen to this—$162 billion a year. Even around here that is real money. In order for these savings to be realized, we have to create an infrastructure for interoperability.

All the different health providers and insurers and doctors have to be able to get the information electronically, but doctors, hospitals, health care advocates, the business community, including small businesses, are clamoring for Congress to take action and establish uniform health IT standards. That will cut down on the cost of the software.

Time is of the essence. If Congress does not act, our health care system will move forward in a highly inefficient, fragmented, and disjointed way. Among other things, this bill will eliminate duplicative tests and reduce medical errors. That is a lot of where that $162 billion a year in savings comes from.

Health care reform cannot simply expand health insurance coverage. It must also expand access to actual providers of care. There are growing shortages of health care providers nationally, with a shortage of up to 200,000 primary care physicians and 1 million nurses expected by 2020. Who is going to take care of us at the hospital if we don't have nurses? Who is going to help make a diagnosis if we don't have doctors?

That is why the ninth step of Ten Steps helps future providers and nurses pay for their education while encouraging them to serve in areas with great need with five key reforms.

This legislation provides competitive matching grants for States to encourage nurses to return to the profession after having left the workforce for 3 years or more while reaffirming the commitment to current programs targeting nurse educators and nurse education. So this will encourage people to come back into providing that excellent service. To deal with the shortage right now, this legislation will expand the number of nonimmigrant skilled workers visa slots for nurses serving in medically underserved areas.

To expand access to those most vulnerable, Ten Steps reaffirms the commitment to current programs that are working, such as the Community Health Centers program and the loan repayment programs at the National Health Service Corps. Working together, these two programs provide key support in underserved areas.

To allow for greater access to health care services, clarification will be made that convenient care clinics may accept and receive reimbursement from Medicaid and SCHIP patients. These convenient care clinics are small health care facilities located in retail outlets providing affordable and accessible nonemergency health care from nurses, physician assistants, and physicians. Often open 7 days a week, these clinics provide an option for those seeking routine and preventive care services in a more convenient setting—at the retail outlets—and with patients seen typically within 15 minutes.

Finally, building upon the successes of current rural health programs, Ten Steps will ensure appropriate development of rural health systems and access to care for residents in rural areas.

In providing access to health care, I believe it is important to envision where we want to provide that care. Community and home-based care is often much preferred, less costly, and proven to increase quality of life. To encourage innovative approaches to keeping long-term care in residential settings, competitive grants will be available to give seniors more options for receiving care in home or community-based settings. We just had a hearing on that subject in the HELP Committee. It was both very helpful and very convincing.

The final step to Ten Steps decreases the skyrocketing cost of health care by restoring reliability in our medical justice system through State-based solutions. The bill I have been discussing today includes the Fair and Reliable Medical Justice Act, which I just introduced with Senator BAUCUS, for States to encourage early disclosure of preventable health care errors, prompt and fair compensation for injured patients, and careful analysis on patterns of health care errors to prevent future injuries. By funding demonstration projects, States are enabled to experiment with and learn from ideas leading to long-term solutions tailored to the unique circumstances of each State.

No one—not patients or health care providers—is appropriately served by our current medical litigation procedures. Right now, many patients who are hurt by negligent actions receive no compensation for their loss. Those who do receive merely 40 cents of every premium dollar, given the high cost of legal fees and administrative costs. That is simply a waste of medical resources.

Furthermore, the likelihood and the outcomes of lawsuits and settlements bear little relation to whether the health care provider was at fault. Consequently, we are not learning from our mistakes. Rather, we are simply diverting our doctors. When someone has a medical emergency, they want to see a doctor in an operating room, not a courtroom.

The medical liability system is losing information that could be used to improve the practice of medicine. Although zero medical errors is an unattainable goal, the reduction of medical errors should be the ultimate goal in medical reform. The Institute of Medicine, in its landmark study called ''To Err is Human,'' estimated that preventable medical errors kill somewhere between 44,000 and 98,000 Americans each year. That study further emphasized that to improve our health care outcomes, we should no longer focus on individual situations but on the whole system of care that is failing American patients.

In the 8 years since that study, little progress has been made. Instead, the practice of medicine has become more specialized and complex while the tort system is more focused on individual blame than on a system safety.

I realize I have talked for quite a bit about Ten Steps, and given the current crisis, we should be talking a lot more about real solutions, not just problems. I also want everyone to know I believe the introduction of this bill today is simply the first step forward. I look forward to talking with others about their thoughts on how to improve this proposal, how to better refine it so it can better serve all Americans.

With all of that talk, I also want action, real action, to provide real coverage for Americans, not a large expansion of a government program with a huge pricetag that does little to impact those who are uninsured.

We have an opportunity, we have an obligation to take care of the people of this country, and they are demanding it. Let's work from a basis of some information and see where we can take it so that we get a solution and we get action now.

By Mr. KERRY (for himself, Ms. SNOWE, Ms. CANTWELL, and Ms. LANDRIEU):

S. 1784. A bill to amend the Small Business Act to improve programs for veterans, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship.

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, I am pleased to introduce today the Military Reservist and Veteran Small Business Reauthorization and Opportunity Act. As the Chairman of the Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship, I am gratified that I was able to work with Ranking Member Senator SNOWE on behalf of the 25 million veterans currently in America, including over 1 million who have left military service since September 11, 2001. As the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan continue, the number of veterans, including service disabled veterans, will increase and reservists will continue to carry more of the burden then ever before. As veterans and reservists reenter civilian life, the small business programs provided by the Federal Government will become even more critical. I am serious about addressing the problems affecting veterans and reservists who wish or are already engaged in small business and this bill is another step forward in doing so.

The Military Reservist and Veteran Small Business Reauthorization and Opportunity Act of 2007 reauthorizes the veteran programs in the Small Business Administration. Specifically, this legislation increases the funding authorization for the Office of Veteran Business Development from $2 million today to $2.5 million over three years. In light of the large numbers of veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan and increased responsibilities placed on this office by Executive Order 13360, it is high time that the Office of Veteran Business Development receive the funding levels that it needs.

The bill also creates an Interagency Task Force to improve coordination between agencies in administrating veteran small business programs. One of the biggest complaints that our Committee heard at the ''Assessing Federal Small Business Assistance Programs for Veterans and Reservists'' hearing held on January 31st was that Federal agencies do not work together in reaching out to veterans and informing them about small business programs. This task force is an attempt to improve that. The task force is composed of representatives from Small Business Administration, Department of Defense, Department of Veterans Affairs, Department of Labor, General Services Administration, Office of Management Budget and four veterans service organizations appointed by the President. The task force will focus on increasing veterans' small business success, including procurement and franchising opportunities, access to capital, and other types of business development assistance.

This bill also permanently extends the SBA Advisory Committee on Veterans Business Affairs. The committee was created to serve as an independent source of advice and policy recommendations to the SBA, the Congress, and the President. The veteran small business owners who serve on this committee provide a unique perspective which is sorely needed at this challenging time. Unfortunately, continuing uncertainty about the Committee's future has, at times, distracted the committee from focusing on its core function. Therefore, I have called for its permanent extension. It is clear to me that more needs to be done to address the issues facing veterans and reservists, and the role this committee plays will continue to be important.

Additionally, I have taken a number of steps to better serve the reservists who are serving their country abroad while their businesses are suffering at home. Over the past decade, the Department of Defense has increased its reliance on the National Guard and reserves. This has intensified since September 11, 2001, and increased deployments are expected to continue. The affect of this increase on reservists and small businesses continues to remain of concern. A 2003 GAO report indicated that 41 percent of reservists lost income when mobilized. This had a higher effect on self-employed reservists, 55 percent of whom lost income.

In 1999, I created the Military Reservist Economic Injury Disaster Loan, MREIDL, program to provide loans to small businesses that incur economic injury as a result of an essential employee being called to active duty. However, since 2002, fewer than 300 of these loans have been approved by the SBA, despite record numbers of reservists being called to active duty. It is clear that changes need to be made, so that reservists are informed about the availability of the MREIDL program and that the program better meets their needs.

At the hearing on January 31, we heard suggestions for a number of

changes which would improve the Military Reservist Economic Injury Disaster Loan program, and I have included those changes in this bill. They include increasing the application deadline for such a loan from 90 days to 1 year following the date of discharge; creating a predeployment loan approval process; and improved outreach and technical assistance.

This bill also increases to $50,000 the amount SBA can disburse without requiring collateral under the MREIDL program. Reservist families have already sacrificed enough when a family member goes away to serve their country and when their business is harmed as a result. This loan program would allow reservist dependent businesses to access the capital they need to stay afloat without having to sacrifice beyond the service of the key employees. In order to give reservists time to repay the loans, the non-collaterized loan created in this bill would not accumulate interest or require payments for one year or until after the deployment ends, whichever is longer.

While addressing the funding needs of reservists is essential, I also want to make sure that reservists receive the technical and management assistance they need to succeed. For that reason, this bill also includes the establishment of the Reservists Enterprise Transition and Sustainability Task Force. This grant program would allow Small Business Development Centers, Women's Business Centers and veteran centers to compete for grants to create programs that help small businesses prepare for and cope with the mobilization of reservist-employees and owners.

There are two more provisions which will help this Nation's service members. One section of the bill will require the SBA to give priority to MREIDL loans during loan processing. Another provision will give activated service members an extension of any SBA time limitations equal to the time spent on active duty. This will make it easier for service members to serve their country while continuing to meet their obligations at home.

Lastly, this bill calls for two reports. One report will look at the needs of service-disabled veterans who are interested in becoming entrepreneurs. As a result of the war on terror and improved medicine, we are seeing more service-disabled veterans than we have seen in decades. For some service-disabled veterans, entrepreneurship is the best or only way of achieving economic independence. Therefore, it is essential that we understand and take steps to address the needs of the service-disabled veteran entrepreneur or small business owner.

This bill also calls for a study to investigate how to improve relations between reservists and their employers. In January, the Committee heard that recent changes by the Department of Defense to policies regulating the length and frequency of reservist deployments is harming the ability of reservists to find jobs and the ability of small business owners to continue hiring them. Witnesses testified about reservists being turned down or not considered for jobs because they are reservists. I have heard reservists talk about being pressured to leave the reserves if they would like to continue to advance at work. I have also heard the concerns of small business owners who want to support servicemembers; however, they cannot do so if it means the survival of their business. Understanding more about this issue is important and essential to making sure that policymakers can continue to support citizen soldiers and the small businesses that employ them across the Nation.

Veterans possess great technical skills and valuable leadership experience, but they require financial resources and small business training to turn that potential into a viable enterprise. A recent report by the Small Business Administration stated that 22 percent of veterans plan to start or are starting a business when they leave the military. For service-disabled veterans, this number rises to 28 percent. This bill is another step forward in providing the necessary resources for veterans and reservists to succeed in starting or growing a small business.

I ask unanimous consent that the text of the bill be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the text of the bill was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

S. 1784

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''Military Reservist and Veteran Small Business Reauthorization and Opportunity Act of 2007''.

SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act—

(1) the term ''activated'' means receiving an order placing a Reservist on active duty;

(2) the term ''active duty'' has the meaning given that term in section 101 of title 10, United States Code;

(3) the terms ''Administration'' and ''Administrator'' mean the Small Business Administration and the Administrator thereof, respectively;

(4) the term ''Reservist'' means a member of a reserve component of the Armed Forces, as described in section 10101 of title 10, United States Code;

(5) the term ''Service Corps of Retired Executives'' means the Service Corps of Retired Executives authorized by section 8(b)(1) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 637(b)(1));

(6) the terms ''service-disabled veteran'' and ''small business concern'' have the meanings given those terms in section 3 of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 632);

(7) the term ''small business development center'' means a small business development center described in section 21 of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 648); and

(8) the term ''women's business center'' means a women's business center described in section 29 of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 656).

TITLE I—VETERANS BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

SEC. 101. INCREASED FUNDING FOR THE OFFICE OF VETERANS BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT.

(a) IN GENERAL.—There are authorized to be appropriated to the Office of Veterans Business Development of the Administration, to remain available until expended—

(1) $2,100,000 for fiscal year 2008;

(2) $2,300,000 for fiscal year 2009; and

(3) $2,500,000 for fiscal year 2010.

(b) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of Congress that any amounts provided pursuant to this section that are in excess of amounts provided to the Administration for the Office of Veterans Business Development in fiscal year 2007, should be used to support Veterans Business Outreach Centers.

SEC. 102. INTERAGENCY TASK FORCE.

Section 32 of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 657b) is amended by adding at the end the following:

''(d) INTERAGENCY TASK FORCE.—

''(1) ESTABLISHMENT.—Not later than 90 days after the date of enactment of this subsection, the President shall establish an interagency task force to coordinate the efforts of Federal agencies necessary to increase capital and business development opportunities for, and increase the award of Federal contracting and subcontracting opportunities to, small business concerns owned and controlled by service-disabled veterans and small business concerns owned and controlled by veterans (in this section referred to as the 'task force').

''(2) MEMBERSHIP.—The members of the task force shall include—

''(A) the Administrator, who shall serve as chairperson of the task force;

''(B) a representative from—

''(i) the Department of Veterans Affairs;

''(ii) the Department of Defense;

''(iii) the Administration (in addition to the Administrator);

''(iv) the Department of Labor;

''(v) the General Services Administration; and

''(vi) the Office of Management and Budget; and

''(C) 4 representatives of veterans service organizations, selected by the President.

''(3) DUTIES.—The task force shall coordinate administrative and regulatory activities and develop proposals relating to—

''(A) increasing capital access and capacity of small business concerns owned and controlled by service-disabled veterans and small business concerns owned and controlled by veterans through loans, surety bonding, and franchising;

''(B) increasing access to Federal contracting and subcontracting for small business concerns owned and controlled by service-disabled veterans and small business concerns owned and controlled by veterans through increased use of contract reservations, expanded mentor-protégé assistance, and matching such small business concerns with contracting opportunities;

''(C) increasing the integrity of certifications of status as a small business concern owned and controlled by service-disabled veterans or a small business concern owned and controlled by veterans;

''(D) reducing paperwork and administrative burdens on veterans in accessing business development and entrepreneurship opportunities; and

''(E) making other improvements relating to the support for veterans business development by the Federal Government.

''(4) REPORTING.—The task force shall submit an annual report regarding its activities and proposals to—

''(A) the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate; and

''(B) the Committee on Small Business and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives.''.

SEC. 103. PERMANENT EXTENSION OF SBA ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON VETERANS BUSINESS AFFAIRS.

(a) ASSUMPTION OF DUTIES.—Section 33 of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 657c) is amended—

(1) by striking subsection (h); and

(2) by redesignating subsections (i) through (k) as subsections (h) through (j), respectively.

(b) PERMANENT EXTENSION OF AUTHORITY.—Section 203 of the Veterans Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development Act of 1999 (15 U.S.C. 657b note) is amended by striking subsection (h).

TITLE II—NATIONAL RESERVIST ENTERPRISE TRANSITION AND SUSTAINABILITY

SEC. 201. SHORT TITLE.

This title may be cited as the ''National Reservist Enterprise Transition and Sustainability Act of 2007''.

SEC. 202. PURPOSE.

The purpose of this title is to establish a program to—

(1) provide managerial, financial, planning, development, technical, and regulatory assistance to small business concerns owned and operated by Reservists;

(2) provide managerial, financial, planning, development, technical, and regulatory assistance to the temporary heads of small business concerns owned and operated by Reservists;

(3) create a partnership between the Small Business Administration, the Department of Defense, and the Department of Veterans Affairs to assist small business concerns owned and operated by Reservists;

(4) utilize the service delivery network of small business development centers, women's business centers, Veterans Business Outreach Centers, and centers operated by the National Veterans Business Development Corporation to expand the access of small business concerns owned and operated by Reservists to programs providing business management, development, financial, procurement, technical, regulatory, and marketing assistance;

(5) utilize the service delivery network of small business development centers, women's business centers, Veterans Business Outreach Centers, and centers operated by the National Veterans Business Development Corporation to quickly respond to an activation of Reservists that own and operate small business concerns; and

(6) utilize the service delivery network of small business development centers, women's business centers, Veterans Business Outreach Centers, and centers operated by the National Veterans Business Development Corporation to assist Reservists that own and operate small business concerns in preparing for future military activations.

SEC. 203. NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVE BUSINESS ASSISTANCE.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 21(a)(1) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 648(a)(1)) is amended by inserting ''any small business development center, women's business center, Veterans Business Outreach Center, or center operated by the National Veterans Business Development Corporation providing enterprise transition and sustainability assistance to Reservists under section 37,'' after ''any women's business center operating pursuant to section 29,''.

(b) PROGRAM.—The Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 631 et seq.) is amended—

(1) by redesignating section 37 (15 U.S.C. 631 note) as section 38; and

(2) by inserting after section 36 the following:

''SEC. 37. RESERVIST ENTERPRISE TRANSITION AND SUSTAINABILITY.

''(a) IN GENERAL.—The Administrator shall establish a program to provide business planning assistance to small business concerns owned and operated by Reservists.

''(b) DEFINITIONS.—In this section—

''(1) the terms 'activated' and 'activation' mean having received an order placing a Reservists on active duty, as defined by section 101(1) of title 10, United States Code;

''(2) the term 'Administrator' means the Administrator of the Small Business Administration, acting through the Associate Administrator for Small Business Development Centers;

''(3) the term 'Association' means the association established under section 21(a)(3)(A);

''(4) the term 'eligible applicant' means—

''(A) a small business development center that is accredited under section 21(k);

''(B) a women's business center;

''(C) a Veterans Business Outreach Center that receives funds from the Office of Veterans Business Development; or

''(D) an information and assistance center operated by the National Veterans Business Development Corporation under section 33;

''(5) the term 'enterprise transition and sustainability assistance' means assistance provided by an eligible applicant to a small business concern owned and operated by a Reservist, who has been activated or is likely to be activated in the next 12 months, to develop and implement a business strategy for the period while the owner is on active duty and 6 months after the date of the return of the owner;

''(6) the term 'Reservist' means any person who is—

''(A) a member of a reserve component of the Armed Forces, as defined by section 10101 of title 10, United States Code; and

''(B) on active status, as defined by section 101(d)(4) of title 10, United States Code;

''(7) the term 'small business development center' means a small business development center as described in section 21 of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 648);

''(8) the term 'State' means each of the several States of the United States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, American Samoa, and Guam; and

''(9) the term 'women's business center' means a women's business center described in section 29 of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 656).

''(c) AUTHORITY.—The Administrator may award grants, in accordance with the regulations developed under subsection (d), to eligible applicants to assist small business concerns owned and operated by Reservists by—

''(1) providing management, development, financing, procurement, technical, regulatory, and marketing assistance;

''(2) providing access to information and resources, including Federal and State business assistance programs;

''(3) distributing contact information provided by the Department of Defense regarding activated Reservists to corresponding State directors;

''(4) offering free, one-on-one, in-depth counseling regarding management, development, financing, procurement, regulations, and marketing;

''(5) assisting in developing a long-term plan for possible future activation; and

''(6) providing enterprise transition and sustainability assistance.

''(d) RULEMAKING.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—The Administrator, in consultation with the Association and after notice and an opportunity for comment, shall promulgate regulations to carry out this section.

''(2) DEADLINE.—The Administrator shall promulgate final regulations not later than 180 days of the date of enactment of the Military Reservist and Veteran Small Business Reauthorization and Opportunity Act of 2007.

''(3) CONTENTS.—The regulations developed by the Administrator under this subsection shall establish—

''(A) procedures for identifying, in consultation with the Secretary of Defense, States that have had a recent activation of Reservists;

''(B) priorities for the types of assistance to be provided under the program authorized by this section;

''(C) standards relating to educational, technical, and support services to be provided by a grantee;

''(D) standards relating to any national service delivery and support function to be provided by a grantee;

''(E) standards relating to any work plan that the Administrator may require a grantee to develop; and

''(F) standards relating to the educational, technical, and professional competency of any expert or other assistance provider to whom a small business concern may be referred for assistance by a grantee.

''(e) APPLICATION.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—Each eligible applicant desiring a grant under this section shall submit an application to the Administrator at such time, in such manner, and accompanied by such information as the Administrator may reasonably require.

''(2) CONTENTS.—Each application submitted under paragraph (1) shall describe—

''(A) the activities for which the applicant seeks assistance under this section; and

''(B) how the applicant plans to allocate funds within its network.

''(3) MATCHING NOT REQUIRED.—Subparagraphs (A) and (B) of section 21(a)(4), requiring matching funds, shall not apply to grants awarded under this section.

''(f) AWARD OF GRANTS.—

''(1) DEADLINE.—The Administrator shall award grants not later than 60 days after the promulgation of final rules and regulations under subsection (d).

''(2) AMOUNT.—Each eligible applicant awarded a grant under this section shall receive a grant in an amount—

''(A) not less than $75,000 per fiscal year; and

''(B) not greater than $300,000 per fiscal year.

''(g) REPORT.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—The Comptroller General of the United States shall—

''(A) initiate an evaluation of the program not later than 30 months after the disbursement of the first grant under this section; and

''(B) submit a report not later than 6 months after the initiation of the evaluation under paragraph (1) to—

''(i) the Administrator;

''(ii) the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship of the Senate; and

''(iii) the Committee on Small Business of the House of Representatives.

''(2) CONTENTS.—The report under paragraph (1) shall—

''(A) address the results of the evaluation conducted under paragraph (1); and

''(B) recommend changes to law, if any, that it believes would be necessary or advisable to achieve the goals of this section.

''(h) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—There are authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section—

''(A) $5,000,000 for the first fiscal year beginning after the date of enactment of the

Military Reservist and Veteran Small Business Reauthorization and Opportunity Act of 2007; and

''(B) $5,000,000 for each of the 3 fiscal years following the fiscal year described in subparagraph (A).

''(2) LIMITATION ON USE OF OTHER FUNDS.—The Administrator may carry out the program authorized by this section only with amounts appropriated in advance specifically to carry out this section.''.

TITLE III—RESERVIST PROGRAMS

SEC. 301. RESERVIST PROGRAMS.

(a) APPLICATION PERIOD.—Section 7(b)(3)(C) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 636(b)(3)(C)) is amended by striking ''90 days'' and inserting ''1 year''.

(b) PRE-CONSIDERATION PROCESS.—

(1) DEFINITION.—In this subsection, the term ''eligible Reservist'' means a Reservist who—

(A) has not been ordered to active duty;

(B) expects to be ordered to active duty during a period of military conflict; and

(C) can reasonably demonstrate that the small business concern for which that Reservist is a key employee will suffer economic injury in the absence of that Reservist.

(2) ESTABLISHMENT.—Not later than 6 months after the date of enactment of this Act, the Administrator shall establish a preconsideration process, under which the Administrator—

(A) may collect all relevant materials necessary for processing a loan to a small business concern under section 7(b)(3) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 636(b)(3)) before an eligible Reservist employed by that small business concern is activated; and

(B) shall distribute funds for any loan approved under subparagraph (A) if that eligible Reservist is activated.

(c) OUTREACH AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 6 months after the date of enactment of this Act, the Administrator, in consultation with the Secretary of Veterans Affairs and the Secretary of Defense, shall develop a comprehensive outreach and technical assistance program (in this subsection referred to as the ''program'') to—

(A) market the loans available under section 7(b)(3) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 636(b)(3)) to Reservists, and family members of Reservists, that are on active duty and that are not on active duty; and

(B) provide technical assistance to a small business concern applying for a loan under that section.

(2) COMPONENTS.—The program shall—

(A) incorporate appropriate websites maintained by the Administration, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and the Department of Defense; and

(B) require that information on the program is made available to small business concerns directly through—

(i) the district offices and resource partners of the Administration, including small business development centers, women's business centers, and the Service Corps of Retired Executives; and

(ii) other Federal agencies, including the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Defense.

(3) REPORT.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 6 months after the date of enactment of this Act, and every 6 months thereafter until the date that is 30 months after such date of enactment, the Administrator shall submit to Congress a report on the status of the program.

(B) CONTENTS.—Each report submitted under subparagraph (A) shall include—

(i) for the 6-month period ending on the date of that report—

(I) the number of loans approved under section 7(b)(3) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 636(b)(3));

(II) the number of loans disbursed under that section; and

(III) the total amount disbursed under that section; and

(ii) recommendations, if any, to make the program more effective in serving small business concerns that employ Reservists.

SEC. 302. RESERVIST LOANS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 7(b)(3)(E) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 636(b)(3)(E)) is amended by striking ''$1,500,000'' each place such term appears and inserting ''$2,000,000''.

(b) LOAN INFORMATION.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Administrator and the Secretary of Defense shall develop a joint website and printed materials providing information regarding any program for small business concerns that is available to veterans or Reservists.

(2) MARKETING.—The Administrator is authorized—

(A) to advertise and promote the program under section 7(b)(3) of the Small Business Act jointly with the Secretary of Defense and veterans' service organizations; and

(B) to advertise and promote participation by lenders in such program jointly with trade associations for banks or other lending institutions.

SEC. 303. NONCOLLATERALIZED LOANS.

Section 7(b)(3) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 636(b)(3)) is amended by adding at the end the following:

''(G)(i) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the Administrator may make a loan under this paragraph of not more than $50,000 without collateral.

''(ii) The Administrator may defer payment of principal and interest on a loan described in clause (i) during the longer of—

''(I) the 1-year period beginning on the date of the initial disbursement of the loan; and

''(II) the period during which the relevant essential employee is on active duty.''.

SEC. 304. LOAN PRIORITY.

Section 7(b)(3) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 636(b)(3)), as amended by this Act, is amended by adding at the end the following:

''(H) The Administrator shall give priority to any application for a loan under this paragraph and shall process and make a determination regarding such applications prior to processing or making a determination on other loan applications under this subsection, on a rolling basis.''.

SEC. 305. RELIEF FROM TIME LIMITATIONS FOR VETERAN-OWNED SMALL BUSINESSES.

Section 3(q) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 632(q)) is amended by adding at the end the following:

''(5) RELIEF FROM TIME LIMITATIONS.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—Any time limitation on any qualification, certification, or period of participation imposed under this Act on any program available to small business concerns shall be extended for a small business concern that—

''(i) is owned and controlled by—

''(I) a veteran who was called or ordered to active duty under a provision of law specified in section 101(a)(13)(B) of title 10, United States Code, on or after September 11, 2001; or

''(II) a service-disabled veteran who became such a veteran due to an injury or illness incurred or aggravated in the active military, naval, or air service during a period of active duty pursuant to a call or order to active duty under a provision of law referred to in subclause (I) on or after September 11, 2001; and

''(ii) was subject to the time limitation during such period of active duty.

''(B) DURATION.—Upon submission of proper documentation to the Administrator, the extension of a time limitation under subparagraph (A) shall be equal to the period of time that such veteran who owned or controlled such a concern was on active duty as described in that subparagraph.''.

SEC. 306. SERVICE-DISABLED VETERANS.

Not later than 180 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General of the United States shall submit to the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship of the Senate and the Committee on Small Business of the House of Representatives a report describing—

(1) the types of assistance needed by service-disabled veterans who wish to become entrepreneurs; and

(2) any resources that would assist such service-disabled veterans.

SEC. 307. STUDY ON OPTIONS FOR PROMOTING POSITIVE WORKING RELATIONS BETWEEN EMPLOYERS AND THEIR RESERVE COMPONENT EMPLOYEES.

(a) STUDY REQUIRED.—The Secretary of Defense shall conduct a study on options for promoting positive working relations between employers and Reserve component employees of such employers, including assessing options for improving the time in which employers of Reservists are notified of the call or order of such members to active duty other than for training.

(b) REPORT.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Defense shall submit to the appropriate committees of Congress a report on the study conducted under subsection (a).

(2) CONTENTS.—The report submitted under paragraph (1) shall—

(A) provide a quantitative and qualitative assessment of—

(i) what measures, if any, are being taken to inform Reservists of the obligations and responsibilities of such members to their employers;

(ii) how effective such measures have been; and

(iii) whether there are additional measures that could be taken to promote positive working relations between Reservists and their employers, including any steps that could be taken to ensure that employers are timely notified of a call to active duty; and

(B) assess whether there has been a reduction in the hiring of Reservists by business concerns because of—

(i) any increase in the use of Reservists after September 11, 2001; or

(ii) any change in any policy of the Department of Defense relating to Reservists after September 11, 2001.

(c) APPROPRIATE COMMITTEES OF CONGRESS DEFINED.—In this section, the term ''appropriate committees of Congress'' means—

(1) the Committee on Armed Services and the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship of the Senate; and

(2) the Committee on Armed Services and the Committee on Small Business of the House of Representatives.

Ms. SNOWE. Mr. President, as ranking member of the Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship, I rise today, with Senator KERRY, to introduce the Military Reservist and Veteran Small Business Reauthorization and Opportunity Act of 2007. This bill improves the programs and resources available to our Nation's veteran entrepreneurs and the small businesses that employ our veterans.

Thank you, Senator KERRY, for working so closely with me on this bipartisan legislation and for your long

standing commitment to our Nation's veterans. This bipartisan measure contains key provisions from both S. 904, the Veterans Small Business Opportunity Act of 2007, which I introduced in March, and Senator KERRY's S. 1005, Military Reservist and Veteran Small Business Reauthorization Act of 2007. It is truly critical that all of our fellow Senators, on both sides of the aisle, continue to collaborate on our veterans' behalf and support swift passage of this legislation.

In October 2003, I requested a Congressional Budget Office Report entitled ''The Effects of Reserve Call-Ups on Civilian Employers.'' That report, issued in May 2005, highlighted the problems that our nation's small businesses face when their owners or key employees are ''called up'' to serve in defense of our Nation. In response to that report's findings, I offered two bills to improve the resources and programs targeted to these veterans and small businesses. Those bills, S. 1014, the Supporting our Patriotic Businesses Act, and S. 3122, the Patriot Loan Act of 2006, were the genesis of S. 904 that I introduced earlier this year. Similarly, Senator KERRY has an established history of working on these issues, and the Small Business Committee on January 31 held its first hearing of the 110th Congress regarding programs to assist veterans and reservists.

In recent years, our Nation's Guard and Reserve forces, which I collectively refer to as reservists, have selflessly answered the call to duty in both Iraq and Afghanistan. In fact, there have been over 425,000 reservist deployments, including nearly 3,000 from my home State of Maine, to those two countries since September 11, 2001. With the majority of nongovernmental reservists either being self-employed or working for small businesses, it is easy to see that veteran entrepreneurs and small businesses are profoundly and disproportionately impacted by these deployments.

As our reservists answer our Nation's call to duty, we must similarly fulfill our obligations to help protect their livelihood back home. In addition to addressing this responsibility, our legislation includes other broad provisions to help our Nation's veteran entrepreneurs across the board.

First, our bill makes vast improvements to the Small Business Administration's, SBA, Military Reservist Economic Disaster Loan, MREIDL, program. The MREIDL program provides funds to businesses to meet ordinary and necessary business expenses that they could have made, if not for the deployment of a reservist who is one of their essential employees.

Specifically, the bill establishes a preapplication process so businesses can be prepared, in advance, to apply for an MREIDL and includes a provision allowing a businesses up to 1 year, as opposed to 90 days, to apply. The legislation increases, from $1.5 million to $2 million, the maximum MREIDL loan a business can take and raises, from $5,000 to $50,000, the level of uncollateralized MREIDL loans available to businesses. Finally, our changes to the MREIDL program would allow the SBA Administrator to defer the payment of principal and interest while the employee is deployed.

Second, the measure also includes a national reservist enterprise transition and sustainability provision. This provision would allow the SBA to award grants to entities that assist businesses with preparing and implementing a business strategy to cover the period of time that the owner is called-up on active duty through 6 months after that owner's date of return.

Third, our bill would create a new Interagency Task Force to coordinate the efforts of Federal agencies necessary to increase capital and business development opportunities for, and increase the award of Federal contracting opportunities to, small businesses owned and controlled by veterans. This type of coordinated and targeted effort by our Federal Government is long overdue.

Finally, today's legislation would increase funding for the SBA's Office of Veterans Business Development, and permanently extend the duties and responsibilities of the SBA Advisory Committee on Veterans Business Affairs. It would also allow small businesses owned and operated by veterans to extend their SBA program participation time limitations by the duration of their owner's deployment.

While I have not provided an exhaustive list of this bill's provisions and all that it would do, a simple review of the legislation will reveal that it goes far toward helping our nation's veteran entrepreneurs and our patriotic small businesses that employ reservists, despite the risk that deployments entail. Our legislation is not a silver bullet, but it is certainly a step in the right direction. To that end, I urge my colleagues to join us in support of this bill.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 269—EXPRESSING THE SENSE OF THE SENATE THAT THE CITIZENS' STAMP ADVISORY COMMITTEE SHOULD RECOMMEND TO THE POSTMASTER GENERAL THAT A COMMEMORATIVE POSTAGE STAMP BE ISSUED IN HONOR OF FORMER UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE BARBARA JORDAN

Mr. LAUTENBERG (for himself, Mr. CORNYN, Mr. HATCH, Mr. MENENDEZ, Mr. SPECTER, Mr. LEVIN, Mrs. CLINTON, Mr. OBAMA, Ms. MIKULSKI, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. BIDEN, Mrs. HUTCHISON, Mr. DODD, Mrs. BOXER, and Ms. LANDRIEU) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs:

S. RES. 269

Whereas, in 1966, Barbara Jordan became the first African American since 1883 to serve in the Texas Senate, where she served with distinction until 1972;

Whereas Barbara Jordan became the first African American United States Representative from Texas when she won election to represent Texas's 18th District in the United States House of Representatives in 1972;

Whereas, from 1979 to 1996, Barbara Jordan served as a distinguished professor at the University of Texas Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs, where she also held the Lyndon B. Johnson Centennial Chair in National Policy;

Whereas President Bill Clinton awarded Barbara Jordan the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the Nation's highest civilian honor, in August 1994; and

Whereas Barbara Jordan was a pioneer whose devotion to civil rights for all people in the United States resonates to this day: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That it is the sense of the Senate that the Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee should recommend to the Postmaster General that a commemorative postage stamp be issued in honor of former United States Representative Barbara Jordan.

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Mr. President, I submit today a resolution calling on former Congresswoman Barbara Jordan to be honored with a commemorative stamp. Congresswoman Jordan was the first African American and the first woman to deliver a keynote address at the Democratic National Convention, which was delivered exactly 31 years ago today.

Congresswoman Barbara Jordan was a pioneer whose devotion to civil rights certainly warrants recognition. She was born in Houston on February 21, 1936, educated in Houston's public schools, and received a B.A. in political science and history from Texas Southern University in 1956. Congresswoman Jordan graduated from Boston University School of Law in 1959, after which she was admitted to the Massachusetts and Texas bars.

In 1966, Congresswoman Jordan became the first African American since 1883 to serve in the Texas Senate, where she served with distinction until 1972. That year, she won election to represent Texas' 18th District in the U.S. House of Representatives and became the State's first African-American Representative. In August 1994, President Bill Clinton awarded Congresswoman Jordan the Medal of Freedom, the Nation's highest civilian honor.

Overcoming some of the most difficult odds imaginable, Congresswoman Jordan always fought hard for what she believed in, devoting herself to improving the quality of life for all Americans. I am pleased that the Senate is considering this resolution which is cosponsored by 14 other Senators, including the 2 distinguished Senators from Texas, Congresswoman Jordan's home State.

SENATE RESOLUTION 270—HONORING THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE INTERNATIONAL PEACE GARDEN

Mr. CONRAD (for himself and Mr. DORGAN) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary:

S. RES. 270

Whereas the International Peace Garden was conceived in 1928 by Dr. Henry J. Moore, a Canadian member of the National Association of Gardeners, who said the garden would be ''a memorial to international friendship that shall endure to all time'';

Whereas the International Peace Garden, a National Park affiliate, was dedicated in 1932, with 50,000 people in attendance, on the border between the State of North Dakota and the Province of Manitoba as a symbol of the long-standing peace, friendship, and cooperation between the United States and Canada;

Whereas a cairn of native stone was constructed on the international border and inscribed ''To God in His Glory. . . We two nations dedicate this garden and pledge ourselves that as long as men shall live we will not take up arms against one another'';

Whereas in 1934 the Civilian Conservation Corps helped plant and construct the garden on the 2,339 acres of land donated by the State of North Dakota and Province of Manitoba;

Whereas the first building built by the Civilian Conservation Corps, the Lodge, made of North Dakota granite and timber from the Duck Mountains in Manitoba, still remains in the garden today;

Whereas more than 150,000 flowers grace the garden each year and another 2,000 to 5,000 plants and flowers comprise a large working floral clock, a centerpiece of the garden;

Whereas symbols of peace appear throughout the garden, including the 120 foot Peace Tower honoring early immigrants, the Peace Poles donated by the Japanese government that declare ''May Peace Prevail'' in 28 different languages, and the Peace Chapel, the only building to straddle the international border;

Whereas the garden's bell tower has a set of Sifton chimes, cast by Gillett and Johnston of Croydon, England, that are 1 of only 4 sets that exist in the world today;

Whereas more than 150,000 visitors travel to the International Peace Garden every year to view the floral displays, fountains, sunken garden, and other scenic vistas;

Whereas the International Peace Garden hosts the International Music Camp, which offers musical opportunities and instruction for students and adults from around the world, and the Legion Athletic Camp, one of the top student athletic training camps;

Whereas the State of North Dakota proudly declares itself the Peace Garden State in recognition and honor of the International Peace Garden;

Whereas the State of North Dakota, the Province of Manitoba, the United States, and the Canadian Governments have each contributed to the garden and its continued preservation;

Whereas the International Peace Garden is undertaking numerous restoration efforts of existing facilities and the addition of a stone-and-glass interpretive center, a tropical plant observatory, and a conflict resolution center; and

Whereas on July 14, 2007, the International Peace Garden will commemorate its 75th Anniversary: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) congratulates the International Peace Garden on its 75th anniversary;

(2) honors the International Peace Garden for sharing its history, beautiful gardens, and a message of peace with the public; and

(3) urges support for continued restoration and expansion efforts at the International Peace Garden.

AMENDMENTS SUBMITTED AND PROPOSED

SA 2131. Mr. DURBIN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 2019 proposed by Mr. LEVIN (for himself and Mr. MCCAIN) to the amendment SA 2011 proposed by Mr. NELSON of Nebraska (for Mr. LEVIN) to the bill H.R. 1585, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes.

SA 2132. Mr. AKAKA (for himself, Mr. CRAIG, Mr. ROCKEFELLER, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. BROWN, Ms. MIKULSKI, Mr. OBAMA, Mr. SPECTER, Mr. BIDEN, Mr. TESTER, Mr. DORGAN, Mr. SANDERS, and Mr. WEBB) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 2011 proposed by Mr. NELSON of Nebraska (for Mr. LEVIN) to the bill H.R. 1585, supra.

SA 2133. Mr. MCCAIN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 2134. Mr. LAUTENBERG (for himself and Mr. MENENDEZ) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 2135. Mr. DORGAN (for himself, Mr. CONRAD, and Mr. SALAZAR) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 2011 proposed by Mr. NELSON of Nebraska (for Mr. LEVIN) to the bill H.R. 1585, supra.

SA 2136. Mrs. CLINTON (for herself and Ms. COLLINS) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by her to the bill H.R. 1585, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 2137. Mr. BINGAMAN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 2138. Mr. PRYOR (for himself and Mr. CHAMBLISS) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 2139. Mr. CORNYN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 2140. Mr. CORNYN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 2141. Mr. CORNYN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 2142. Mr. CORNYN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 2143. Mr. CORNYN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 2144. Mr. SCHUMER submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 2145. Mr. NELSON of Nebraska (for himself and Ms. COLLINS) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 2146. Mr. BYRD (for himself, Mrs. CLINTON, and Mr. SANDERS) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 2147. Mr. SESSIONS (for himself and Mr. SHELBY) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 2148. Mr. SESSIONS submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 2149. Mr. OBAMA (for himself and Mrs. MURRAY) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 2150. Mr. LAUTENBERG (for himself, Mr. DODD, Mr. COBURN, and Mr. HAGEL) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 2151. Mr. FEINGOLD (for himself, Mr. GRASSLEY, and Mr. LIEBERMAN) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 2152. Mr. BIDEN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 2153. Mr. BIDEN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 2154. Mr. GRAHAM submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 2011 proposed by Mr. NELSON of Nebraska (for Mr. LEVIN) to the bill H.R. 1585, supra.

SA 2155. Ms. SNOWE (for herself and Mrs. LINCOLN) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 2019 proposed by Mr. LEVIN (for himself and Mr. MCCAIN) to the amendment SA 2011 proposed by Mr. NELSON of Nebraska (for Mr. LEVIN) to the bill H.R. 1585, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 2156. Ms. SNOWE (for herself and Mrs. LINCOLN) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 2019 proposed by Mr. LEVIN (for himself and Mr. MCCAIN) to the amendment SA 2011 proposed by Mr. NELSON of Nebraska (for Mr. LEVIN) to the bill H.R. 1585, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 2157. Ms. SNOWE (for herself and Mrs. LINCOLN) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 2019 proposed by Mr. LEVIN (for himself and Mr. MCCAIN) to the amendment SA 2011 proposed by Mr. NELSON of Nebraska (for Mr. LEVIN) to the bill H.R. 1585, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 2158. Mr. NELSON of Nebraska (for Mr. JOHNSON) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by Mr. NELSON of Nebraska to the bill H.R. 1585, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 2159. Mr. NELSON of Nebraska (for himself and Mr. GRAHAM) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 2019 proposed by Mr. LEVIN (for himself and Mr. MCCAIN) to the amendment SA 2011 proposed by Mr. NELSON of Nebraska (for Mr. LEVIN) to the bill H.R. 1585, supra.

SA 2160. Mr. NELSON of Nebraska (for himself and Mr. GRAHAM) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 2019 proposed by Mr. LEVIN (for himself and Mr. MCCAIN) to the amendment SA 2011 proposed by Mr. NELSON of Nebraska (for Mr. LEVIN) to the bill H.R. 1585, supra.

SA 2161. Mr. NELSON of Nebraska (for himself and Mr. GRAHAM) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 2162. Ms. SNOWE (for herself and Mrs. LINCOLN) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 2019 proposed by Mr. LEVIN (for himself and Mr. MCCAIN) to the amendment SA 2011 proposed by Mr. NELSON of Nebraska (for Mr. LEVIN) to the bill H.R. 1585, supra.

SA 2163. Mrs. CLINTON (for herself and Ms. COLLINS) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by her to the bill H.R. 1585, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 2164. Mr. SMITH (for himself, Mr. HARKIN, Ms. COLLINS, and Mrs. LINCOLN) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 2165. Mr. BOND (for himself and Mr. LEAHY) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 2166. Mr. SMITH submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 2167. Mr. GRASSLEY (for himself, Ms. STABENOW, and Mr. HARKIN) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 2168. Mr. SESSIONS submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 2169. Mr. WHITEHOUSE (for himself, Mr. DURBIN, Ms. MIKULSKI, Mr. FEINGOLD, and Mrs. FEINSTEIN) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 2170. Mr. REID submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 2171. Mr. FEINGOLD (for himself, Mr. LEAHY, Mr. DODD, Mr. KERRY, Mrs. BOXER, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, Mr. KENNEDY, Mr. HARKIN, Mr. SANDERS, and Mr. WYDEN) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 2172. Mr. CONRAD (for himself, Mr. DORGAN, Ms. LANDRIEU, and Mr. VITTER) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 2173. Mr. KOHL (for himself and Mr. WARNER) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 2174. Mr. LEVIN (for himself and Mr. MCCAIN) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 2175. Mr. LEVIN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 2176. Mr. DODD submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 2177. Mr. BINGAMAN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 2178. Mr. KYL (for himself, Mr. VITTER, Mr. INHOFE, Mr. LIEBERMAN, and Mr. LOTT) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 2179. Mr. DOMENICI (for himself and Mr. BINGAMAN) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 2180. Mr. DOMENICI (for himself and Mr. BINGAMAN) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 2181. Mr. LOTT submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 2182. Mr. LOTT submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 2183. Mr. WYDEN (for himself, Mr. BOND, and Mr. ROCKEFELLER) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 2184. Mr. SUNUNU proposed an amendment to amendment SA 2135 submitted by Mr. DORGAN (for himself, Mr. CONRAD, and Mr. SALAZAR) to the amendment SA 2011 proposed by Mr. NELSON of Nebraska (for Mr. LEVIN) to the bill H.R. 1585, supra.

SA 2185. Mr. AKAKA submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 2186. Mr. SANDERS submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 2187. Mr. SANDERS submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 2019 proposed by Mr. LEVIN (for himself and Mr. MCCAIN) to the amendment SA 2011 proposed by Mr. NELSON of Nebraska (for Mr. LEVIN) to the bill H.R. 1585, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 2188. Mr. LIEBERMAN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

TEXT OF AMENDMENTS

SA 2131. Mr. DURBIN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 2019 proposed by Mr. LEVIN (for himself and Mr. MCCAIN) to the amendment SA 2011 proposed by Mr. NELSON of Nebraska (for Mr. LEVIN) to the bill H.R. 1585, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; as follows:

At the end of section 1631(b), add the following:

(16) A program under which each member of the Armed Forces who incurs a traumatic brain injury or post-traumatic stress disorder during service in the Armed Forces—

(A) is enrolled in the program; and

(B) receives, under the program, treatment and rehabilitation meeting a standard of care such that each individual who is a member of the Armed Forces who qualifies for care under the program shall—

(i) be provided the highest quality of care possible based on the medical judgment of qualified medical professionals in facilities that most appropriately meet the specific needs of the individual; and

(ii) be rehabilitated to the fullest extent possible using the most up-to-date medical technology, medical rehabilitation practices, and medical expertise available.

(17) A requirement that if a member of the Armed Forces participating in a program established in accordance with paragraph (16) believes that care provided to such participant does not meet the standard of care specified in subparagraph (B) of such paragraph, the Secretary of Defense shall, upon request of the participant, provide to such participant a referral to another Department of Defense or Department of Veterans Affairs provider of medical or rehabilitative care for a second opinion regarding the care that would meet the standard of care specified in such subparagraph.

(18) The provision of information by the Secretary of Defense to members of the Armed Forces with traumatic brain injury or post-traumatic stress disorder and their families about their rights with respect to the following:

(A) The receipt of medical and mental health care from the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs.

(B) The options available to such members for treatment of traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress disorder.

(C) The options available to such members for rehabilitation.

(D) The options available to such members for a referral to a public or private provider of medical or rehabilitative care.

(E) The right to administrative review of any decision with respect to the provision of care by the Department of Defense for such members.

SA 2132. Mr. AKAKA (for himself, Mr. CRAIG, Mr. ROCKEFELLER, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. BROWN, Ms. MIKULSKI, Mr. OBAMA, Mr. SPECTER, Mr. BIDEN, Mr. TESTER, Mr. DORGAN, Mr. SANDERS, and Mr. WEBB) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 2011 proposed by Mr. NELSON of Nebraska (for Mr. LEVIN) to the bill H.R. 1585, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; as follows:

At the end of division A, add the following:

TITLE XVI—VETERANS MATTERS

SEC. 1601. SENSE OF CONGRESS ON DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS EFFORTS IN THE REHABILITATION AND REINTEGRATION OF VETERANS WITH TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY.

It is the sense of Congress that—

(1) the Department of Veterans Affairs is a leader in the field of traumatic brain injury care and coordination of such care;

(2) the Department of Veterans Affairs should have the capacity and expertise to provide veterans who have a traumatic brain injury with patient-centered health care, rehabilitation, and community integration services that are comparable to or exceed similar care and services available to persons with such injuries in the academic and private sector;

(3) rehabilitation for veterans who have a traumatic brain injury should be individualized, comprehensive, and interdisciplinary with the goals of optimizing the independence of such veterans and reintegrating them into their communities;

(4) family support is integral to the rehabilitation and community reintegration of veterans who have sustained a traumatic brain injury, and the Department should provide the families of such veterans with education and support;

(5) the Department of Defense and Department of Veterans Affairs have made efforts

to provide a smooth transition of medical care and rehabilitative services to individuals as they transition from the health care system of the Department of Defense to that of the Department of Veterans Affairs, but more can be done to assist veterans and their families in the continuum of the rehabilitation, recovery, and reintegration of wounded or injured veterans into their communities;

(6) in planning for rehabilitation and community reintegration of veterans who have a traumatic brain injury, it is necessary for the Department of Veterans Affairs to provide a system for life-long case management for such veterans; and

(7) in such system for life-long case management, it is necessary to conduct outreach and to tailor specialized traumatic brain injury case management and outreach for the unique needs of veterans with traumatic brain injury who reside in urban and non-urban settings.

SEC. 1602. INDIVIDUAL REHABILITATION AND COMMUNITY REINTEGRATION PLANS FOR VETERANS AND OTHERS WITH TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter II of chapter 17 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by inserting after section 1710B the following new section:

"§ 1710C. Traumatic brain injury: plans for rehabilitation and reintegration into the community

''(a) PLAN REQUIRED.—The Secretary shall, for each veteran or member of the Armed Forces who receives inpatient or outpatient rehabilitation care from the Department for a traumatic brain injury—

''(1) develop an individualized plan for the rehabilitation and reintegration of such individual into the community; and

''(2) provide such plan in writing to such individual before such individual is discharged from inpatient care, following transition from active duty to the Department for outpatient care, or as soon as practicable following diagnosis.

''(b) CONTENTS OF PLAN.—Each plan developed under subsection (a) shall include, for the individual covered by such plan, the following:

''(1) Rehabilitation objectives for improving the physical, cognitive, and vocational functioning of such individual with the goal of maximizing the independence and reintegration of such individual into the community.

''(2) Access, as warranted, to all appropriate rehabilitative components of the traumatic brain injury continuum of care.

''(3) A description of specific rehabilitative treatments and other services to achieve the objectives described in paragraph (1), which description shall set forth the type, frequency, duration, and location of such treatments and services.

''(4) The name of the case manager designated in accordance with subsection (d) to be responsible for the implementation of such plan.

''(5) Dates on which the effectiveness of the plan will be reviewed in accordance with subsection (f).

''(c) COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—Each plan developed under subsection (a) shall be based upon a comprehensive assessment, developed in accordance with paragraph (2), of—

''(A) the physical, cognitive, vocational, and neuropsychological and social impairments of such individual; and

''(B) the family education and family support needs of such individual after discharge from inpatient care.

''(2) FORMATION.—The comprehensive assessment required under paragraph (1) with respect to an individual is a comprehensive assessment of the matters set forth in that paragraph by a team, composed by the Secretary for purposes of the assessment from among, but not limited to, individuals with expertise in traumatic brain injury, including the following:

''(A) A neurologist.
''(B) A rehabilitation physician.
''(C) A social worker.
''(D) A neuropsychologist.
''(E) A physical therapist.
''(F) A vocational rehabilitation specialist.
''(G) An occupational therapist.
''(H) A speech language pathologist.
''(I) A rehabilitation nurse.
''(J) An educational therapist.
''(K) An audiologist.
''(L) A blind rehabilitation specialist.
''(M) A recreational therapist.
''(N) A low vision optometrist.
''(O) An orthotist or prostetist.
''(P) An assistive technologist or rehabilitation engineer.
''(Q) An otolaryngology physician.
''(R) A dietician.
''(S) An opthamologist.
''(T) A psychiatrist.

''(d) CASE MANAGER.—(1) The Secretary shall designate a case manager for each individual described in subsection (a) to be responsible for the implementation of the plan, and coordination of such care, required by such subsection for such individual.

''(2) The Secretary shall ensure that such case manager has specific expertise in the care required by the individual to whom such case manager is designated, regardless of whether such case manager obtains such expertise through experience, education, or training.

''(e) PARTICIPATION AND COLLABORATION IN DEVELOPMENT OF PLANS.—(1) The Secretary shall involve each individual described in subsection (a), and the family or legal guardian of such individual, in the development of the plan for such individual under that subsection to the maximum extent practicable.

''(2) The Secretary shall collaborate in the development of a plan for an individual under subsection (a) with a State protection and advocacy system if—

''(A) the individual covered by such plan requests such collaboration; or

''(B) in the case such individual is incapacitated, the family or guardian of such individual requests such collaboration.

''(3) In the case of a plan required by subsection (a) for a member of the Armed Forces who is on active duty, the Secretary shall collaborate with the Secretary of Defense in the development of such plan.

''(4) In developing vocational rehabilitation objectives required under subsection (b)(1) and in conducting the assessment required under subsection (c), the Secretary shall act through the Under Secretary for Health in coordination with the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Service of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

''(f) EVALUATION.—

''(1) PERIODIC REVIEW BY SECRETARY.—The Secretary shall periodically review the effectiveness of each plan developed under subsection (a). The Secretary shall refine each such plan as the Secretary considers appropriate in light of such review.

''(2) REQUEST FOR REVIEW BY VETERANS.—In addition to the periodic review required by paragraph (1), the Secretary shall conduct a review of the plan of a veteran under paragraph (1) at the request of such veteran, or in the case that such veteran is incapacitated, at the request of the guardian or the designee of such veteran.

''(g) STATE DESIGNATED PROTECTION AND ADVOCACY SYSTEM DEFINED.—In this section, the term 'State protection and advocacy system' means a system established in a State under subtitle C of the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 2000 (42 U.S.C. 15041 et seq.) to protect and advocate for the rights of persons with development disabilities.''.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 17 of such title is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 1710B the following new item:

''1710C. Traumatic brain injury: plans for rehabilitation and reintegration into the community.''.

SEC. 1603. USE OF NON-DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS FACILITIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF REHABILITATION AND COMMUNITY REINTEGRATION PLANS FOR TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter II of chapter 17 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by inserting after section 1710C, as added by section 1602 of this Act, the following new section:

"§ 1710D. Traumatic brain injury: use of non-Department facilities for rehabilitation

''(a) IN GENERAL.—Subject to section 1710(a)(4) of this title and subsection (b) of this section, the Secretary shall provide rehabilitative treatment or services to implement a plan developed under section 1710C of this title at a non-Department facility with which the Secretary has entered into an agreement for such purpose, to an individual—

''(1) who is described in section 1710C(a) of this title; and

''(2)(A) to whom the Secretary is unable to provide such treatment or services at the frequency or for the duration prescribed in such plan; or

''(B) for whom the Secretary determines that it is optimal with respect to the recovery and rehabilitation of such individual .

''(b) STANDARDS.—The Secretary may not provide treatment or services as described in subsection (a) at a non-Department facility under such subsection unless such facility maintains standards for the provision of such treatment or services established by an independent, peer-reviewed organization that accredits specialized rehabilitation programs for adults with traumatic brain injury.

''(c) AUTHORITIES OF STATE PROTECTION AND ADVOCACY SYSTEMS.—With respect to the provision of rehabilitative treatment or services described in subsection (a) in a non-Department facility, a State designated protection and advocacy system established under subtitle C of the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 2000 (42 U.S.C. 15041 et seq.) shall have the authorities described under such subtitle.''.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 17 of such title is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 1710C, as added by section 1602 of this Act, the following new item:

''1710D. Traumatic brain injury: use of non-Department facilities for rehabilitation.''.

(c) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—Section 1710(a)(4) of such title is amended by inserting ''the requirement in section 1710D of this title that the Secretary provide certain rehabilitative treatment or services,'' after ''extended care services,''.

SEC. 1604. RESEARCH, EDUCATION, AND CLINICAL CARE PROGRAM ON SEVERE TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY.

(a) PROGRAM REQUIRED.—Subchapter II of chapter 73 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by inserting after section 7330 the following new section:

"§ 7330A. Severe traumatic brain injury research, education, and clinical care program

''(a) PROGRAM REQUIRED.—The Secretary shall establish a program on research, education, and clinical care to provide intensive neuro-rehabilitation to veterans with a severe traumatic brain injury, including veterans in a minimally conscious state who would otherwise receive only long-term residential care.

''(b) COLLABORATION REQUIRED.—The Secretary shall establish the program required by subsection (a) in collaboration with the Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center and other relevant programs of the Federal Government (including other Centers of Excellence).

''(c) EDUCATION REQUIRED.—As part of the program required by subsection (a), the Secretary shall, in collaboration with the Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center and any other relevant programs of the Federal Government (including other Centers of Excellence), conduct educational programs on recognizing and diagnosing mild and moderate cases of traumatic brain injury.

''(d) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary for each of fiscal years 2008 through 2012, $10,000,000 to carry out the program required by subsection (a).''.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 73 is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 7330 the following new item:

''7330A. Severe traumatic brain injury research, education, and clinical care program.''.

(c) REPORT.—Not later than 18 months after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to Congress a report on the research to be conducted under the program required by section 7330A of title 38, United States Code, as added by subsection (a).

SEC. 1605. PILOT PROGRAM ON ASSISTED LIVING SERVICES FOR VETERANS WITH TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY.

(a) PILOT PROGRAM.—Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall, in collaboration with the Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center, carry out a pilot program to assess the effectiveness of providing assisted living services to eligible veterans to enhance the rehabilitation, quality of life, and community integration of such veterans.

(b) DURATION OF PROGRAM.—The pilot program shall be carried out during the five-year period beginning on the date of the commencement of the pilot program.

(c) PROGRAM LOCATIONS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The pilot program shall be carried out at locations selected by the Secretary for purposes of the pilot program. Of the locations so selected—

(A) at least one shall be in each health care region of the Veterans Health Administration that contains a polytrauma center of the Department of Veterans Affairs; and

(B) any other locations shall be in areas that contain high concentrations of veterans with traumatic brain injury, as determined by the Secretary.

(2) SPECIAL CONSIDERATION FOR VETERANS IN RURAL AREAS.—Special consideration shall be given to provide veterans in rural areas with an opportunity to participate in the pilot program.

(d) PROVISION OF ASSISTED LIVING SERVICES.—

(1) AGREEMENTS.—In carrying out the pilot program, the Secretary may enter into agreements for the provision of assisted living services on behalf of eligible veterans with a provider participating under a State plan or waiver under title XIX of such Act (42 U.S.C. 1396 et seq.).

(2) STANDARDS.—The Secretary may not place, transfer, or admit a veteran to any facility for assisted living services under this program unless the Secretary determines that the facility meets such standards as the Secretary may prescribe for purposes of the pilot program. Such standards shall, to the extent practicable, be consistent with the standards of Federal, State, and local agencies charged with the responsibility of licensing or otherwise regulating or inspecting such facilities.

(e) CONTINUATION OF CASE MANAGEMENT AND REHABILITATION SERVICES.—In carrying the pilot program under subsection (a), the Secretary shall continue to provide each veteran who is receiving assisted living services under the pilot program with rehabilitative services and shall designate Department health-care employees to furnish case management services for veterans participating in the pilot program.

(f) REPORT.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 60 days after the completion of the pilot program, the Secretary shall submit to the congressional veterans affairs committees a report on the pilot program.

(2) CONTENTS.—The report required by paragraph (1) shall include the following:

(A) A description of the pilot program.

(B) An assessment of the utility of the activities under the pilot program in enhancing the rehabilitation, quality of life, and community reintegration of veterans with traumatic brain injury.

(C) Such recommendations as the Secretary considers appropriate regarding the extension or expansion of the pilot program.

(g) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) The term ''assisted living services'' means services of a facility in providing room, board, and personal care for and supervision of residents for their health, safety, and welfare.

(2) The term ''case management services'' includes the coordination and facilitation of all services furnished to a veteran by the Department of Veterans Affairs, either directly or through contract, including assessment of needs, planning, referral (including referral for services to be furnished by the Department, either directly or through a contract, or by an entity other than the Department), monitoring, reassessment, and followup.

(3) The term ''congressional veterans affairs committees'' means—

(A) the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate; and

(B) the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives.

(4) The term ''eligible veteran'' means a veteran who—

(A) is enrolled in the Department of Veterans Affairs health care system;

(B) has received treatment for traumatic brain injury from the Department of Veterans Affairs;

(C) is unable to manage routine activities of daily living without supervision and assistance; and

(D) could reasonably be expected to receive ongoing services after the end of the pilot program under this section under another government program or through other means.

(h) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out this section, $8,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2008 through 2013.

SEC. 1606. RESEARCH ON TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY.

(a) INCLUSION OF RESEARCH ON TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY UNDER ONGOING RESEARCH PROGRAMS.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall, in carrying out research programs and activities under the provisions of law referred to in subsection (b), ensure that such programs and activities include research on the sequelae of mild to severe forms of traumatic brain injury, including—

(1) research on visually-related neurological conditions;

(2) research on seizure disorders;

(3) research on means of improving the diagnosis, rehabilitative treatment, and prevention of such sequelae;

(4) research to determine the most effective cognitive and physical therapies for the sequelae of traumatic brain injury; and

(5) research on dual diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injury.

(b) RESEARCH AUTHORITIES.—The provisions of law referred to in this subsection are the following:

(1) Section 3119 of title 38, United States Code, relating to rehabilitation research and special projects.

(2) Section 7303 of such title, relating to research programs of the Veterans Health Administration.

(3) Section 7327 of such title, relating to research, education, and clinical activities on complex multi-trauma associated with combat injuries.

(c) COLLABORATION.—In carrying out the research required by subsection (a), the Secretary shall collaborate with facilities that—

(1) conduct research on rehabilitation for individuals with traumatic brain injury; and

(2) receive grants for such research from the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research of the Department of Education.

(d) REPORT.—Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report describing in comprehensive detail the research to be carried out pursuant to subsection (a).

SEC. 1607. AGE-APPROPRIATE NURSING HOME CARE.

(a) FINDING.—Congress finds that young veterans who are injured or disabled through military service and require long-term care should have access to age-appropriate nursing home care.

(b) REQUIREMENT TO PROVIDE AGE-APPROPRIATE NURSING HOME CARE.—Section 1710A of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) by redesignating subsection (c) as subsection (d); and

(2) by inserting after subsection (b) the following new subsection (c):

''(c) The Secretary shall ensure that nursing home care provided under subsection (a) is provided in an age-appropriate manner.''.

SEC. 1608. EXTENSION OF PERIOD OF ELIGIBILITY FOR HEALTH CARE FOR COMBAT SERVICE IN THE PERSIAN GULF WAR OR FUTURE HOSTILITIES.

Section 1710(e)(3)(C) of title 38, United States Code, is amended by striking ''2 years'' and inserting ''5 years''.

SEC. 1609. MENTAL HEALTH: SERVICE-CONNECTION STATUS AND EVALUATIONS FOR CERTAIN VETERANS.

(a) PRESUMPTION OF SERVICE-CONNECTION OF MENTAL ILLNESS FOR CERTAIN VETERANS.—Section 1702 of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) by striking ''psychosis'' and inserting ''mental illness''; and

(2) in the heading, by striking ''**psychosis**'' and inserting ''**mental illness**''.

(b) PROVISION OF MENTAL HEALTH EVALUATIONS FOR CERTAIN VETERANS.—Upon the request of a veteran described in section 1710(e)(3)(C) of title 38, United States Code, the Secretary shall provide to such veteran a

preliminary mental health evaluation as soon as practicable, but not later than 30 days after such request.

SEC. 1610. MODIFICATION OF REQUIREMENTS FOR FURNISHING OUTPATIENT DENTAL SERVICES TO VETERANS WITH A SERVICE-CONNECTED DENTAL CONDITION OR DISABILITY.

Section 1712(a)(1)(B)(iv) of title 38, United States Code, is amended by striking ''90-day'' and inserting ''180-day''.

SEC. 1611. DEMONSTRATION PROGRAM ON PREVENTING VETERANS AT-RISK OF HOMELESSNESS FROM BECOMING HOMELESS.

(a) DEMONSTRATION PROGRAM.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall carry out a demonstration program for the purpose of—

(1) identifying members of the Armed Forces on active duty who are at risk of becoming homeless after they are discharged or released from active duty; and

(2) providing referral, counseling, and supportive services, as appropriate, to help prevent such members, upon becoming veterans, from becoming homeless.

(b) PROGRAM LOCATIONS.—The Secretary shall carry out the demonstration program in at least three locations.

(c) IDENTIFICATION CRITERIA.—In developing and implementing the criteria to identify members of the Armed Forces, who upon becoming veterans, are at-risk of becoming homeless, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall consult with the Secretary of Defense and such other officials and experts as the Secretary considers appropriate.

(d) CONTRACTS.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs may enter into contracts to provide the referral, counseling, and supportive services required under the demonstration program with entities or organizations that meet such requirements as the Secretary may establish.

(e) SUNSET.—The authority of the Secretary under subsection (a) shall expire on September 30, 2011.

(f) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There are authorized to be appropriated $2,000,000 for the purpose of carrying out the provisions of this section.

SEC. 1612. CLARIFICATION OF PURPOSE OF THE OUTREACH SERVICES PROGRAM OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) CLARIFICATION OF INCLUSION OF MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVE IN PROGRAM.—Subsection (a)(1) of section 6301 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by inserting '', or from the National Guard or Reserve,'' after ''active military, naval, or air service''.

(b) DEFINITION OF OUTREACH.—Subsection (b) of such section is amended—

(1) by redesignating paragraphs (1) and (2) as paragraphs (2) and (3), respectively; and

(2) by inserting before paragraph (2) the following new paragraph (1):

''(1) the term 'outreach' means the act or process of reaching out in a systematic manner to proactively provide information, services, and benefits counseling to veterans, and to the spouses, children, and parents of veterans who may be eligible to receive benefits under the laws administered by the Secretary, to ensure that such individuals are fully informed about, and assisted in applying for, any benefits and programs under such laws;''.

SA 2133. Mr. MCCAIN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the end of subtitle F of title VI, add the following:

SEC. 683. MODIFICATION OF AMOUNT OF BACK PAY FOR MEMBERS OF NAVY AND MARINE CORPS SELECTED FOR PROMOTION WHILE INTERNED AS PRISONERS OF WAR DURING WORLD WAR II TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT CHANGES IN CONSUMER PRICE INDEX.

(a) MODIFICATION.—Section 667(c) of the Floyd D. Spence National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2001 (as enacted into law by Public Law 106–398; 114 Stat. 1654A–170) is amended by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

''(3) The amount determined for a person under paragraph (1) shall be increased to reflect increases in cost of living since the basic pay referred to in paragraph (1)(B) was paid to or for that person, calculated on the basis of the Consumer Price Index (all items—United States city average) published monthly by the Bureau of Labor Statistics.''.

(b) RECALCULATION OF PREVIOUS PAYMENTS.—In the case of any payment of back pay made to or for a person under section 667 of the Floyd D. Spence National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2001 before the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of the Navy shall—

(1) recalculate the amount of back pay to which the person is entitled by reason of the amendment made by subsection (a); and

(2) if the amount of back pay, as so recalculated, exceeds the amount of back pay so paid, pay the person, or the surviving spouse of the person, an amount equal to the excess.

SA 2134. Mr. LAUTENBERG (for himself and Mr. MENENDEZ) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the end of title III, add the following:

SEC. 358. REPORTS ON SAFETY MEASURES AND ENCROACHMENT ISSUES AT WARREN GROVE GUNNERY RANGE, NEW JERSEY.

(a) FINDINGS.—Congress makes the following findings:

(1) The United States Air Force has 32 training sites in the United States for aerial bombing and gunner training, of which Warren Grove Gunnery Range functions in the densely populated Northeast.

(2) A number of dangerous safety incidents caused by the Air National Guard have repeatedly impacted the residents of New Jersey, including the following:

(A) On May 15, 2007, a fire ignited during an Air National Guard practice mission at Warren Grove Gunnery Range, scorching 17,250 acres of New Jersey's Pinelands, destroying 5 houses, significantly damaging 13 others, and temporarily displacing approximately 6,000 people from their homes in sections of Ocean and Burlington Counties.

(B) In November 2004, an F-16 Vulcan cannon piloted by the District of Columbia Air National Guard was more than 3 miles off target when it blasted 1.5-inch steel training rounds into the roof of the Little Egg Harbor Township Intermediate School.

(C) In 2002, a pilot ejected from an F–16 aircraft just before it crashed into the woods near the Garden State Parkway, sending large pieces of debris onto the busy highway.

(D) In 1999, a dummy bomb was dumped a mile off target from the Warren Grove target range in the Pine Barrens, igniting a fire that burned 12,000 acres of the Pinelands forest.

(E) In 1997, the pilots of F–16 aircraft uplifting from the Warren Grove Gunnery Range escaped injury by ejecting from their aircraft just before the planes collided over the ocean near the north end of Brigantine. Pilot error was found to be the cause of the collision.

(F) In 1986, a New Jersey Air National Guard jet fighter crashed in a remote section of the Pine Barrens in Burlington County, starting a fire that scorched at least 90 acres of woodland.

(b) SEMIANNUAL REPORT ON SAFETY MEASURES.—Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, and every 180 days thereafter, the Secretary of the Air Force shall submit to the congressional defense committees a report on efforts made to provide the highest level of safety by all of the military departments utilizing the Warren Grove Gunnery Range.

(c) JOINT LAND USE STUDY ON ENCROACHMENT AT WARREN GROVE GUNNERY RANGE.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of the Air Force shall submit to the congressional defense committees a joint land use study on encroachment issues at Warren Grove Gunnery Range.

(2) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is authorized to be appropriated $250,000 for fiscal year 2008 to conduct the joint use study under paragraph (1).

SA 2135. Mr. DORGAN (for himself, Mr. CONRAD, and Mr. SALAZAR) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 2011 proposed by Mr. NELSON of Nebraska (for Mr. LEVIN) to the bill H.R. 1585, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; as follows:

At the end of subtitle B of title XII, add the following:

SEC. 1218. JUSTICE FOR OSAMA BIN LADEN AND OTHER LEADERS OF AL QAEDA.

(a) ENHANCED REWARD FOR CAPTURE OF OSAMA BIN LADEN.—Section 36(e)(1) of the State Department Basic Authorities Act of 1956 (22 U.S.C. 2708e)(1)) is amended by adding at the end the following new sentence: ''The Secretary shall authorize a reward of $50,000,000 for the capture, or information leading to the capture, of Osama bin Laden.''.

(b) STATUS OF EFFORTS TO BRING OSAMA BIN LADEN AND OTHER LEADERS OF AL QAEDA TO JUSTICE.—

(1) REPORTS REQUIRED.—Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, and every 90 days thereafter, the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Defense shall, in coordination with the Director of National Intelligence, jointly submit to Congress a report on the progress made in bringing Osama bin Laden and other leaders of al Qaeda to justice.

(2) ELEMENTS.—Each report under paragraph (1) shall include, current as of the date of such report, the following:

(A) An assessment of the likely current location of terrorist leaders, including Osama bin Laden, Ayman al-Zawahiri, and other key leaders of al Qaeda.

(B) A description of ongoing efforts to bring to justice such terrorist leaders, particularly those who have been directly implicated in attacks in the United States and its embassies.

(C) An assessment of whether the government of each country assessed as a likely location of top leaders of al Qaeda has fully cooperated in efforts to bring those leaders to justice.

(D) A description of diplomatic efforts currently being made to improve the cooperation of the governments described in subparagraph (C).

(E) A description of the current status of the top leadership of al Qaeda and the strategy for locating them and bringing them to justice.

(F) An assessment of whether al Qaeda remains the terrorist organization that poses the greatest threat to United States interests, including the greatest threat to the territorial United States.

(3) FORM OF REPORT.—Each report submitted to Congress under paragraph (1) shall be submitted in a classified form, and shall be accompanied by a report in unclassified form that redacts the classified information in the report.

SA 2136. Mrs. CLINTON (for herself and Ms. COLLINS) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by her to the bill H.R. 1585, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the end of title VII, add the following:

SEC. 703. TRAINING AND CERTIFICATION PROGRAM FOR FAMILY CAREGIVER PERSONAL CARE ATTENDANTS FOR VETERANS AND MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES WITH TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY.

(a) PROGRAM ON TRAINING AND CERTIFICATION OF FAMILY CAREGIVER PERSONAL CARE ATTENDANTS.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall establish a program on training and certification of family caregivers of veterans and members of the Armed Forces with traumatic brain injury as personal care attendants of such veterans and members.

(b) LOCATION.—The program required by subsection (a) shall be located in each of the polytrauma centers of the Department of Veterans Affairs designated as a Tier I polytrauma center.

(c) TRAINING CURRICULA.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall, in collaboration with the Secretary of Defense, develop curricula for the training of personal care attendants described in subsection (a). Such curricula shall incorporate applicable standards and protocols utilized by certification programs of national brain injury care specialist organizations.

(2) USE OF EXISTING CURRICULA.—In developing the curricula required by paragraph (1), the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall, to the extent practicable, utilize and expand upon training curricula developed pursuant to section 744(b) of the John Warner National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2007 (Public Law 109–364; 120 Stat. 2308).

(d) PROGRAM PARTICIPATION.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall determine the eligibility of a family member of a veteran or member of the Armed Forces for participation in the program required by subsection (a).

(2) BASIS FOR DETERMINATION.—A determination made under paragraph (1) shall be based on the clinical needs of the veteran or member of the Armed Forces concerned, as determined by the physician of such veteran or member.

(e) ELIGIBILITY FOR COMPENSATION.—A family caregiver of a veteran or member of the Armed Forces who receives certification as a personal care attendant under this section shall be eligible for compensation from the Department of Veterans Affairs for care provided to such veteran or member.

(f) COSTS OF TRAINING.—

(1) TRAINING OF FAMILIES OF VETERANS.—Any costs of training provided under the program under this section for family members of veterans shall be borne by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

(2) TRAINING OF FAMILIES OF MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES.—The Secretary of Defense shall reimburse the Secretary of Veterans Affairs for any costs of training provided under the program under this section for family members of members of the Armed Forces. Amounts for such reimbursement shall be derived from amounts available for Defense Health Program for the TRICARE program.

(g) CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in this section shall be construed to require or permit the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to deny reimbursement for health care services provided to a veteran with a brain injury to a personal care attendant who is not a family member of such veteran.

SA 2137. Mr. BINGAMAN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the end of title XI, add the following:

SEC. 1107. EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE IN SUPPORT OF THE NUCLEAR MISSIONS OF THE NAVY.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of the Navy shall carry out a program to provide scholarships, fellowships, and grants for pursuit of programs of education at institutions of higher education that lead to degrees in engineering and technical fields that are necessary for a workforce to support the nuclear missions of the Navy.

(b) ELEMENTS.—The program under subsection (a) shall include the following:

(1) Merit-based scholarships for undergraduate study.

(2) Research fellowships for study the graduate level.

(3) Grants to support the establishment at 2-year public institutions of higher education of programs of study and training that lead to degrees in engineering and technical fields that are necessary for a workforce to support the nuclear missions of the Navy.

(4) Grants to increase the utilization of training, research, and test reactors at institutions of higher education.

(5) Any other elements that the Secretary considers appropriate.

(c) CONSULTATION.—In developing the program, the Secretary shall consult with trade organizations, technical societies, organized labor organizations, and other bodies having an interest in the program.

(d) REPORT ON PROGRAM.—Not later than January 31, 2008, the Secretary shall submit to Congress a report on the program under subsection (a), including a description of the program and a statement of the funding required during fiscal years 2009 through 2013 to carry out the program.

(e) REPORT ON WORKFORCE REQUIREMENTS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Energy shall jointly submit to Congress a report on the requirements for a workforce to support the nuclear missions of the Navy during the 10-year period beginning on the date of the report.

(2) ELEMENTS.—The report shall address anticipated changes to the nuclear missions of the Navy during the 10-year period beginning on the date of the report, anticipated workforce attrition, and retirement, and recruiting trends during that period and knowledge retention programs within the Department of Defense, the Department of Energy, the national laboratories, and federally funded research facilities.

SA 2138. Mr. PRYOR (for himself and Mr. CHAMBLISS) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the end of subtitle E of title VI, add the following:

SEC. 673. EXPANSION OF PROGRAMS OF EDUCATION ELIGIBLE FOR ACCELERATED PAYMENT OF EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE UNDER MONTGOMERY GI BILL.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subsection (b) of section 3014A of title 38, United States Code, is amended by striking paragraph (1) and inserting the following new paragraph (1):

''(1) enrolled in—

''(A) an approved program of education that leads to employment in a high technology occupation in a high technology industry (as determined pursuant to regulations prescribed by the Secretary); or

''(B) during the period beginning on October 1, 2007, and ending on September 30, 2011, an approved program of education lasting less than two years that (as so determined) leads to employment in—

''(i) the transportation sector of the economy;

''(ii) the construction sector of the economy;

''(iii) the hospitality sector of the economy; or

''(iv) the energy sector of the economy; and''.

(b) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—

(1) HEADING AMENDMENT.—The heading of such section is amended to read as follows:

''§ 3014A. Accelerated payment of basic educational assistance''.

(2) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The item relating to such section in the table of sections at the beginning of chapter 30 of such title is amended to read as follows:

''3014A. Accelerated payment of basic educational assistance.''.

SA 2139. Mr. CORNYN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for military activities of the Department

of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the end of subtitle E of title X, add the following:

SEC. 1070. IMPROVED HOUSING BENEFITS FOR DISABLED MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES AND EXPANDED BENEFITS FOR VETERANS WITH SEVERE BURNS.

(a) HOME IMPROVEMENTS AND STRUCTURAL ALTERATIONS FOR TOTALLY DISABLED MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES BEFORE DISCHARGE OR RELEASE FROM THE ARMED FORCES.—Section 1717 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

''(d)(1) In the case of a member of the Armed Forces who, as determined by the Secretary, has a total disability permanent in nature incurred or aggravated in the line of duty in the active military, naval, or air service, the Secretary may furnish improvements and structural alterations for such member for such disability or as otherwise described in subsection (a)(2) while such member is hospitalized or receiving outpatient medical care, services, or treatment for such disability if the Secretary determines that such member is likely to be discharged or released from the Armed Forces for such disability.

''(2) The furnishing of improvements and alterations under paragraph (1) in connection with the furnishing of medical services described in subparagraph (A) or (B) of subsection (a)(2) shall be subject to the limitation specified in the applicable subparagraph.''.

(b) SPECIALLY ADAPTED HOUSING ASSISTANCE FOR DISABLED VETERANS WITH SEVERE BURNS.—Section 2101 of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in subsection (a)(2), by adding at the end the following new subparagraph:

''(E) The disability is due to a severe burn injury (as determined pursuant to regulations prescribed by the Secretary).''; and

(2) in subsection (b)(2)—

(A) by striking ''either'' and inserting ''any''; and

(B) by adding at the end the following new subparagraph:

''(C) The disability is due to a severe burn injury (as so determined).''.

(c) REPORT ON SPECIALLY ADAPTED HOUSING FOR DISABLED VETERANS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than December 31, 2007, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report that contains an assessment of the adequacy of the authorities available to the Secretary under law to assist disabled veterans in acquiring—

(A) suitable housing units with special fixtures or movable facilities required for their disabilities, and necessary land therefor;

(B) such adaptations to their residences as are reasonably necessary because of their disabilities; or

(C) residences already adapted with special features determined by the Secretary to be reasonably necessary as a result of their disabilities.

(2) FOCUS ON PARTICULAR DISABILITIES.—The report required by paragraph (1) shall pay particular attention to the needs of veterans who have disabilities that are not described in subsections (a)(2) and (b)(2) of section 2101 of title 38, United States Code.

(d) ELIGIBILITY OF DISABLED VETERANS AND MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES WITH SEVERE BURN INJURIES FOR AUTOMOBILES AND ADAPTIVE EQUIPMENT.—Section 3901(1) of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in subparagraph (A)—

(A) in the matter preceding clause (i), by striking ''or (iii)'' and inserting ''(iii), or (iv)''; and

(B) by adding at the end the following new clause:

''(iv) A severe burn injury (as determined pursuant to regulations prescribed by the Secretary); or''; and

(2) in subparagraph (B), by striking ''or (iii)'' and inserting ''(iii), or (iv)''.

(e) ADAPTED HOUSING ASSISTANCE FOR DISABLED MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES RESIDING TEMPORARILY IN HOUSING OWNED BY A FAMILY MEMBER.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Subsection (a) of section 2102A of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(A) by inserting ''(1)'' before ''In the case'';

(B) by striking ''disabled veteran who is described in subsection (a)(2) or (b)(2) of section 2101 of this title and'' and inserting ''person described in paragraph (2)'';

(C) by striking ''such veteran's'' and inserting ''the person's'';

(D) by striking ''the veteran'' and inserting ''the person'';

(E) by striking ''the veteran's'' and inserting ''the person's''; and

(F) by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

''(2) A person described in this paragraph is—

''(A) a veteran who is described in subsection (a)(2) or (b)(2) of section 2101 of this title; or

''(B) a member of the Armed Forces who—

''(i) has, as determined by the Secretary, a disability permanent in nature described in subsection (a)(2) or (b)(2) of section 2101 of this title that has incurred in the line of duty in the active military, naval, or air service;

''(ii) is hospitalized or receiving outpatient medical care, services, or treatment for such disability; and

''(iii) is likely to be discharged or released from the Armed Forces for such disability.''.

(2) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—Such section is further amended—

(A) in subsection (b), by striking ''veteran'' both places it appears and inserting ''person with a disability''; and

(B) in subsection (c), by striking ''veteran'' and inserting ''person''.

(3) REPORT ON ASSISTANCE FOR DISABLED VETERANS AND MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES WHO RESIDE IN HOUSING OWNED BY FAMILY MEMBER ON PERMANENT BASIS.—Not later than December 31, 2007, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on the advisability of providing assistance under section 2102A of title 38, United States Code, to veterans and members of the Armed Forces described in subsection (a) of such section, as amended by paragraph (1) of this subsection, who reside with family members on a permanent basis.

SA 2140. Mr. CORNYN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. ___. PERIODS OF ADMISSION.

(a) SHORT TITLE.—This section may be cited as the ''Secure Border Crossing Card Entry Act of 2007''.

(b) PERIODS OF ADMISSION.—Section 214(a)(2) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1184(a)(2)) is amended by adding at the end the following:

''(C)(i) Except as provided under clauses (ii) and (iii), the initial period of admission to the United States of an alien who possesses a valid machine-readable biometric border crossing identification card issued by a consular officer, has successfully completed required background checks, and is admitted to the United States as a nonimmigrant under section 101(a)(15)(B) at a port of entry at which such card is processed through a machine reader, shall not be short than the initial period of admission granted to any other alien admitted to the United States under section 101(a)(15)(B).

''(ii) The Secretary of Homeland Security may prescribe, by regulation, the length of the initial period of admission described in clause (i), which period shall be—

''(I) a minimum of 6 months; or

''(II) the length of time provided for under clause (iii)

''(iii) The Secretary may, on a case-by-case basis, provide for a period of admission that is shorter or longer than the initial period described in clause (ii)(I) if the Secretary finds good cause for such action.

''(iv) An alien who possesses a valid machine-readable biometric border crossing identification card may not be admitted to the United States for the period of admission specified under clause (i) or granted extensions of such period of admission if—

''(I) the alien previously violated the terms and conditions of the alien's nonimmigrant status;

''(II) the alien is inadmissible as a nonimmigrant; or

''(III) the alien's border crossing card has not been processed through a machine reader at the United States port of entry or land border at which the person seeks admission to the United States.''.

(c) RULEMAKING.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Homeland Security shall promulgate regulations to carry out the amendment made by subsection (b).

(2) WAIVER OF APA.—In promulgating regulations under paragraph (1), the Secretary may waive any provision of chapter 5 of title 5, United States Code (commonly known as the ''Administrative Procedure Act'') or any other law relating to rulemaking if the Secretary determines that compliance with such provision would impede the timely implementation of this Act.

SA 2141. Mr. CORNYN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. ___. INTERNATIONAL COMMUTERS.

(a) H–1A TEMPORARY WORKERS.—Section 101(a)(15)(H) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1101(a)(15)(H)) is amended by striking ''(H) an alien (i) (b)'' and inserting the following:

''(H) an alien—

''(i)(a) who—

''(aa) continuously maintains a residence at which the alien is actually domiciled outside the United States, which the alien has no intention of abandoning;

''(bb) is coming temporarily to the United States to perform temporary work of a seasonal nature, not to exceed more than 10 months in any calendar year;

''(cc) commutes each business day, across the international border of the United States, to work in a full-time position with a qualified United States employer; and

''(dd) returns, across such border, to his or her foreign residence at the conclusion of each business day, or

''(b)''.

(b) TEMPORARY LABOR CERTIFICATION.—Section 214(c)(1) of such Act (8 U.S.C. 1184(c)(1)) is amended—

(1) by inserting ''(A)'' after ''(c)(1)'';

(2) by striking ''For purposes of this subsection'' and inserting the following:

''(B) For purposes of this subsection with respect to nonimmigrants described in section 101(a)(15)(H)(i)(a) (referred to in this subparagraph as 'H–1A temporary workers'), the term 'appropriate agencies of the Government' means the Department of Labor. Before filing a petition with the Secretary of Homeland Security for an H–1A temporary worker, the employer shall apply for a temporary labor certification with the Secretary of Labor, which shall inform the Secretary of Homeland Security whether—

''(i) United States workers capable of performing the temporary services or labor are available; and

''(ii) the alien's employment would adversely affect the wages and working conditions of similarly employed United States workers.

''(C) For purposes of this subsection''.

(c) NUMERICAL LIMITATIONS.—Section 214(g) of such Act is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1)—

(A) by redesignating subparagraphs (A) and (B) as subparagraphs (B) and (C), respectively;

(B) by inserting before subparagraph (B), as redesignated, the following:

''(A) under section 101(a)(15)(H)(i)(a) may not exceed 90,000;''; and

(C) in subparagraph (B), as redesignated, by striking ''or'' and inserting ''and'';

(2) in paragraphs (5), (7), and (8), by striking ''paragraph (1)(A)'' each place it appears and inserting ''paragraph (1)(B)''; and

(3) in paragraphs (9) and (10), by striking ''paragraph (1)(B)'' each place it appears and inserting ''paragraph (1)(C)''.

(d) PERIOD OF AUTHORIZED ADMISSION.—Section 214(g)(4) of such Act is amended to read as follows:

''(4)(A) The period of authorized admission for an alien who is provided nonimmigrant status under section 101(a)(15)(H)(i)(a) may not exceed 3 years.

''(B) The period of authorized admission for an alien who is provided nonimmigrant status under section 101(a)(15)(H)(i)(b) may not exceed 6 years.''.

SA 2142. Mr. CORNYN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. ____. LIMITATION ON LANDOWNER'S LIABILITY.

Section 287 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1357) is amended by inserting after subsection (g) the following:

''(h) INDEMNITY FOR ACTIONS OF LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law and subject to appropriations, an owner of land located within 100 miles of the international land border of the United States may seek reimbursement from the Department of Homeland Security for any adverse final tort judgment for negligence (excluding attorneys' fees and costs) authorized under the Federal or State tort law, arising directly from such border security activity if—

''(A) such owner has been found negligent by a Federal or State court in any tort litigation;

''(B) such owner has not already been reimbursed for the final tort judgment, including outstanding attorney's fees and costs;

''(C) such owner did not have or does not have sufficient property insurance to cover the judgment and have had an insurance claim for such coverage denied; and

''(D) such tort action was brought as a direct result of activity of law enforcement officers of the Department of Homeland Security, acting in their official capacity, on the owner's land.

''(2) DEFINITIONS.—In this subsection—

''(A) the term 'land' includes roads, water, watercourses, and private ways, and buildings, structures, machinery and equipment that is attached to real property; and

''(B) the term 'owner' includes the possessor of a fee interest, a tenant, lessee, occupant, the possessor of any other interest in land, or any person having a right to grant permission to use the land.

''(3) EXCEPTIONS.—Nothing in this subsection may be construed to limit landowner liability which would otherwise exist for—

''(A) willful or malicious failure to guard or warn against a known dangerous condition, use, structure, or activity likely to cause harm;

''(B) maintaining an attractive nuisance;

''(C) gross negligence; or

''(D) direct interference with, or hindrance of, any agent or officer of the Federal Government who is authorized to enforce the immigration laws of the United States during—

''(i) a patrol of such landowner's land; or

''(ii) any action taken to apprehend or detain any alien attempting to enter the United States illegally or evade execution of an arrest warrant for a violation of any immigration law.

''(4) SAVINGS PROVISION.—Nothing in this subsection may be construed to affect any right or remedy available pursuant to the Federal Tort Claims Act.''.

SA 2143. Mr. CORNYN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activiites of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. ____. EMPLOYMENT-BASED VISAS.

(a) RECAPTURE OF UNUSED EMPLOYMENT-BASED IMMIGRANT VISAS.—Section 106(d) of the American Competitiveness in the Twenty-first Century Act of 2000 (Public Law 106–313; 8 U.S.C. 1153 note) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1)—

(A) by inserting ''1996, 1997,'' after ''available in fiscal year'';

(B) by striking ''be available'' and all that follows and inserting the following: ''be available only to—

''(A) employment-based immigrants under paragraphs (1) and (2) of section 203(b) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1153(b));

''(B) the family members accompanying or following to join such employment-based immigrants under section 203(d) of such Act; and

''(C) those immigrant workers who had petitions approved based on Schedule A under section 656.5 of title 20, Code of Federal Regulations, as promulgated by the Secretary of Labor.''; and

(2) in paragraph (2)—

(A) in subparagraph (A), by inserting ''1996, 1997, and'' after ''available in fiscal years''; and

(B) in subparagraph (B), by amending clause (ii) to read as follows:

''(ii) DISTRIBUTION OF VISAS.—The total number of visas made available under paragraph (1) from unused visas from fiscal years 1996 and 1997 shall be distributed equally between—

''(I) immigrant workers with approved petitions based on Schedule A (as described in paragraph (1)(C)); and

''(II) employment-based immigrants under paragraphs (1) and (2) of section 203(b) of the Immigration and Nationality Act.''.

(b) H–1B VISA AVAILABILITY.—Section 214(g) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1184(g)) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1)(A)—

(A) in clause (vi), by striking ''and'' at the end;

(B) by redesignating clause (vii) as clause (ix); and

(C) by inserting after clause (vi) the following:

''(vii) 65,000 in each of fiscal years 2004 through 2006;

''(viii) 115,000 in fiscal year 2007; and''; and

(2) in paragraph (4)—

(A) by inserting ''(A)'' after ''(4)''; and

(B) by adding at the end the following:

''(B) Subparagraph (A) shall not apply to a nonimmigrant who has an approved petition for an immigrant visa under paragraph (1) or (2) of section 203(b) if at least 180 days have elapsed since the filing an application for adjustment of status under subsection (a), (k) or (i) of section 245 that has not been denied. The Secretary of Homeland may extend the stay of such an alien in 1-year increments until a final decision is made on the alien's application for adjustment of status.''.

(c) IMMIGRANT VISA BACKLOG REDUCTION.—Section 201(d) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1151(d)) is amended to read as follows:

''(d) WORLDWIDE LEVEL OF EMPLOYMENT-BASED IMMIGRANTS.—The worldwide level of employment-based immigrants under this subsection for a fiscal year is equal to the sum of—

''(1) 290,000; and

''(2) the difference between—

''(A) the maximum number of visas authorized to be issued under this subsection during the previous fiscal year; and

''(B) the number of such visas issued during the previous fiscal year.''.

(d) RETAINING IMMIGRANTS WHO HAVE BEEN EDUCATED IN THE UNITED STATES.—Section 201(b)(1) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1151(b)(1)) is amended by adding at the end the following:

''(F) Aliens who have earned a master's or higher degree from an accredited United States university.

''(G) Aliens who—

''(i) have earned a master's or higher degree in science, technology, engineering, or math; and

''(ii) have been working in the United States in a field related to such degree in a nonimmigrant status during the 3-year period preceding their application for an immigrant visa under paragraph (1) or (2) of section 203(b).

''(H) Aliens who—

''(i) are described in subparagraph (A) or (B) of section 203(b)(1); or

''(ii) have received a national interest waiver under section 203(b)(2)(B).''.

SA 2144. Mr. SCHUMER submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activiites of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the end of subtitle A of title XIV, add the following:

SEC. 1408. ADDITIONAL AMOUNT FOR DRUG INTERDICTION AND COUNTER-DRUG ACTIVITIES WITH RESPECT TO AFGHANISTAN.

(a) ADDITIONAL AMOUNT FOR DRUG INTERDICTION AND COUNTER-DRUG ACTIVITIES, DEFENSE-WIDE.—The amount authorized to be appropriated by section 1405 for Drug Interdiction and Counter-Drug Activities, Defense-wide, is hereby increased by $180,000,000.

(b) AVAILABILITY.—Of the amount authorized to be appropriated by section 1405 for Drug Interdiction and Counter-Drug Activities, Defense-wide, as increased by subsection (a), $180,000,000 may be available for drug interdiction and counterdrug activities with respect to Afghanistan.

(c) SUPPLEMENT NOT SUPPLANT.—The amount available under subsection (b) for the purpose specified in that paragraph is in addition to any other amounts available under this Act for that purpose.

SA 2145. Mr. NELSON of Nebraska (for himself and Ms. COLLINS) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activiites of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the end of subtitle C of title XV, add the following:

SEC. 1535. TRANSITION OF MISSION OF UNITED STATES FORCES IN IRAQ.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Commencing as of the date of the enactment of this Act, the President shall immediately begin the transition of mission for all United States forces in Iraq.

(b) TRANSITION OF MISSION.—United States forces in Iraq shall be limited to—

(1) protecting United States personnel and infrastructure in Iraq;

(2) continuing the training and equipping of Iraqi security forces;

(3) securing Iraq's borders in order to halt and prevent the influx of foreign and al Qaeda fighters into Iraq; and

(4) continuing the conduct of counterterrorism operations against al Qaeda, al Qaeda-affiliated forces, and other terrorist groups engaged in destabilization efforts in Iraq.

(c) GOAL FOR ACTIONS.—The goal of completing the transition and redeployment of United States forces to a new mission in accordance with this section shall be March 31, 2008, as outlined in the report of the Iraq Study Group.

SA 2146. Mr. BYRD (for himself, Mrs. CLINTON, and Mr. SANDERS) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the end of title XV, add the following:

SEC. 1535. EXPIRATION OF AUTHORIZATION FOR USE OF MILITARY FORCE AGAINST IRAQ.

(a) FINDINGS.—Congress makes the following findings:

(1) The Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution of 2002 (Public Law 107–243) authorized the President to use force in Iraq for two limited purposes: to defend the national security of the United States against the continuing threat posed by Iraq; and to enforce all relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions regarding Iraq.

(2) The Government of Iraq identified in the resolution has been removed and no longer poses a threat to the national security of the United States and has been replaced with a democratically-elected government.

(3) The situation in Iraq in 2007 is vastly different than it was in 2002, and involves an internal sectarian conflict rather than a dictatorial regime hostile to the United States.

(b) EXPIRATION.—Section 3 of the Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution of 2002 (Public Law 107–243; 116 Stat. 1501; 50 U.S.C. 1541 note) is amended by adding at the end the following new subsections:

''(d) EXPIRATION.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—The authorization in subsection (a) shall expire on October 11, 2007.

''(2) CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in this subsection shall be construed as—

''(A) denying the United States Armed Forces the capacity to act in self-defense or in protection of the United States Embassy in Baghdad and its personnel;

''(B) precluding the President from withdrawing the United States Armed Forces from Iraq at any time before October 11, 2007, if circumstances warrant;

''(C) precluding Congress by joint resolution from directing such a withdrawal; or

''(D) preventing missions that are specifically permitted in the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008.

''(e) NEW AUTHORITY.—In order to conduct military operations in Iraq that do not relate to the withdrawal of members of the United States Armed Forces after the date specified in subsection (d)(1), the President shall be required to request from Congress specific new authority, and to articulate in detail the mission, strategy, and goals of a continued United States military presence in Iraq.''.

(c) AVAILABILITY OF FUNDS FOR SAFE AND ORDERLY REDEPLOYMENT.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, any funds made available by any Act for the Department of Defense are immediately available for obligation and expenditure to plan and execute a safe and orderly redeployment of the United States Armed Forces from Iraq.

SA 2147. Mr. SESSIONS (for himself and Mr. SHELBY) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the end of subtitle D of title V, add the following:

SEC. 555. AUTHORITY OF THE AIR UNIVERSITY TO CONFER ADDITIONAL ACADEMIC DEGREES.

Section 9317(a) of title 10, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new paragraphs:

''(5) The degree of doctor of philosophy in strategic studies upon graduates of the School of Advanced Airpower Studies who fulfill the requirements for that degree in manner consistent with the guidelines of the Department of Education and the principles of the regional accrediting body for Air University.

''(6) The degree of master of air, space, and cyberspace studies upon graduates of Air University who fulfill the requirements for that degree in a manner consistent with the recommendations of the Department of Education and the principles of the regional accrediting body for Air University.

''(7) The degree of master of flight test engineering science upon graduates of the Air Force Test Pilot School who fulfill the requirements for that degree in a manner consistent with the recommendations of the Department of Education and the principles of the regional accrediting body for Air University.''.

SA 2148. Mr. SESSIONS submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the end of subtitle E of title III, add the following:

SEC. 358. AUTHORITY FOR DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE TO PROVIDE SUPPORT FOR CERTAIN SPORTING EVENTS.

(a) PROVISION OF SUPPORT.—Section 2564 of title 10, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in subsection (c), by adding at the end the following new paragraphs:

''(4) A sporting event sanctioned by the United States Olympic Committee through the Paralympic Military Program.

''(5) Any national or international paralympic sporting event (other than a sporting event described in paragraphs (1) through (4))—

''(A) that—

''(i) is held in the United States or any of its territories or commonwealths;

''(ii) is governed by the International Paralympic Committee; and

''(iii) is sanctioned by the United States Olympic Committee;

''(B) for which participation exceeds 100 amateur athletes; and

''(C) in which at least 25 percent of the athletes participating in the sporting event are members or former members of the armed forces who are participating in the sporting event based upon an injury or wound incurred in the line of duty in the armed force and veterans who are participating in the sporting event based upon a service-connected disability.''; and

(2) by adding at the end the following new subsection:

''(g) FUNDING FOR SUPPORT OF CERTAIN EVENTS.—(1) Amounts for the provision of support for a sporting event described in paragraph (4) or (5) of subsection (c) may be derived from the Support for International Sporting Competitions, Defense account established by section 5802 of the Omnibus Consolidated Appropriations Act, 1997 (10 U.S.C. 2564 note), notwithstanding any limitation under that section relating to the availability of funds in such account for the provision of support for international sporting competitions.

''(2) The total amount expended for any fiscal year to provide support for sporting events described in subsection (c)(5) may not exceed $1,000,000.''.

(b) SOURCE OF FUNDS.—Section 5802 of the Omnibus Consolidated Appropriations Act, 1997 (10 U.S.C. 2564 note) is amended—

(1) by inserting after ''international sporting competitions'' the following: ''and for support of sporting competitions authorized under section 2564(c)(4) and (5), of title 10, United States Code,''; and

(2) by striking ''45 days'' and inserting ''15 days''.

SA 2149. Mr. OBAMA (for himself and Mrs. MURRAY) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the end of title VII, add the following:

SEC. 703. POSTDEPLOYMENT MEDICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH SCREENINGS FOR MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES.

Section 1074f(b) of title 10, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in the second sentence of paragraph (1), by striking ''(or as soon as possible thereafter)'' and inserting '', but not later than 90 days after the redeployment of the member and before a subsequent deployment of the member to an area in which the system is in operation'';

(2) by redesignating paragraph (2) as paragraph (3); and

(3) by inserting after paragraph (1) the following new paragraph (2):

''(2) The postdeployment examination of a member of the armed forces required under paragraph (1) shall include a comprehensive medical and mental health assessment of the member conducted on an individualized basis and in person by personnel qualified to conduct such examinations.''.

SA 2150. Mr. LAUTENBERG (for himself, Mr. DODD, Mr. COBURN, and Mr. HAGEL) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the end of title XV, add the following:

SEC. 1535. SPECIAL INSPECTOR GENERAL FOR AFGHANISTAN RECONSTRUCTION.

(a) FINDINGS.—Congress makes the following findings:

(1) A democratic, stable, and prosperous Afghanistan is vital to the national security of the United States and to combating international terrorism.

(2) Since the fall of the Taliban, the United States has provided Afghanistan with over $20,000,000,000 in reconstruction and security assistance. However, repeated and documented incidents of waste, fraud, and abuse in the utilization of these funds have undermined reconstruction efforts.

(3) There is a stronger need for vigorous oversight of spending by the United States on reconstruction programs and projects in Afghanistan.

(4) The Government Accountability Office (GAO) and departmental Inspectors General provide valuable information on such activities.

(5) The congressional oversight process requires more timely reporting of reconstruction activities in Afghanistan that encompasses the efforts of the Department of State, the Department of Defense, and the United States Agency for International Development and highlights specific acts of waste, fraud, and abuse.

(6) One example of such successful reporting is provided by the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction (SIGIR), which has met this objective in the case of Iraq.

(7) The establishment of a Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) position using SIGIR as a model will help achieve this objective in Afghanistan. This position will help Congress and the American people to better understand the challenges facing United States programs and projects in that crucial country.

(8) It is a priority for Congress to establish a Special Inspector General for Afghanistan position with similar responsibilities and duties as the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction. This new position will monitor United States assistance to Afghanistan in the civilian and security sectors, undertaking efforts similar to those of the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction.

(b) OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL.—There is hereby established the Office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction.

(c) APPOINTMENT OF INSPECTOR GENERAL; REMOVAL.—

(1) APPOINTMENT.—The head of the Office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction is the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (in this section referred to as the ''Inspector General''), who shall be appointed by the President.

(2) QUALIFICATIONS.—The appointment of the Inspector General shall be made solely on the basis of integrity and demonstrated ability in accounting, auditing, financial analysis, law, management analysis, public administration, or investigations.

(3) DEADLINE FOR APPOINTMENT.—The nomination of an individual as Inspector General shall be made not later than 30 days after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(4) REMOVAL.—The Inspector General shall be removable from office in accordance with the provisions of section 3(b) of the Inspector General Act of 1978 (5 U.S.C. App.).

(5) PROHIBITION ON POLITICAL ACTIVITIES.—For purposes of section 7324 of title 5, United States Code, the Inspector General shall not be considered an employee who determines policies to be pursued by the United States in the nationwide administration of Federal law.

(6) COMPENSATION.—The annual rate of basic pay of the Inspector General shall be the annual rate of basic pay provided for positions at level IV of the Executive Schedule under section 5315 of title 5, United States Code.

(d) SUPERVISION.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in paragraph (2), the Inspector General shall report directly to, and be under the general supervision of, the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Defense.

(2) INDEPENDENCE TO CONDUCT INVESTIGATIONS AND AUDITS.—No officer of the Department of Defense, the Department of State, or the United States Agency for International Development shall prevent or prohibit the Inspector General from initiating, carrying out, or completing any audit or investigation, or from issuing any subpoena during the course of any audit or investigation.

(e) DUTIES.—

(1) OVERSIGHT OF AFGHANISTAN RECONSTRUCTION.—It shall be the duty of the Inspector General to conduct, supervise, and coordinate audits and investigations of the treatment, handling, and expenditure of appropriated funds by the United States Government, and of the programs, operations, and contracts carried out utilizing such funds in Afghanistan in order to prevent and detect waste, fraud, and abuse, including—

(A) the oversight and accounting of the obligation and expenditure of such funds;

(B) the monitoring and review of reconstruction activities funded by such funds;

(C) the monitoring and review of contracts funded by such funds;

(D) the monitoring and review of the transfer of such funds and associated information between and among the departments, agencies, and entities of the United States Government, and private and nongovernmental entities;

(E) the maintenance of records on the use of such funds to facilitate future audits and investigations of the use of such funds;

(F) the monitoring and review of the effectiveness of United States coordination with the Government of Afghanistan and other donor countries in the implementation of the Afghanistan Compact and the Afghanistan National Development Strategy and the efficient utilization of funds for economic reconstruction, social and political development, and security assistance;

(G) the recovery of funds for the United States Government, including instances of overpayments such as duplicate payments or duplicate billing; and

(H) the investigation of any potential unethical or illegal actions of Federal employees, contractors, or affiliated entities and the referral of such reports, as necessary, to the Department of Justice to ensure further investigations, prosecutions, or remedies.

(2) OTHER DUTIES RELATED TO OVERSIGHT.—The Inspector General shall establish, maintain, and oversee such systems, procedures, and controls as the Inspector General considers appropriate to discharge the duties under paragraph (1).

(3) DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES UNDER INSPECTOR GENERAL ACT OF 1978.—In addition to the duties specified in paragraphs (1) and (2), the Inspector General shall also have the duties and responsibilities of inspectors general under the Inspector General Act of 1978.

(4) COORDINATION OF EFFORTS.—In carrying out the duties, and responsibilities, and authorities of the Inspector General under this section, the Inspector General shall coordinate with, and receive the cooperation of, each of the following:

(A) The Inspector General of the Department of State.

(B) The Inspector General of the Department of Defense.

(C) The Inspector General of the United States Agency for International Development.

(f) POWERS AND AUTHORITIES.—

(1) AUTHORITIES UNDER INSPECTOR GENERAL ACT OF 1978.—In carrying out the duties specified in subsection (e), the Inspector General shall have the authorities provided in section 6 of the Inspector General Act of 1978.

(2) AUDIT STANDARDS.—The Inspector General shall carry out the duties specified in subsection (e)(1) in accordance with section 4(b)(1) of the Inspector General Act of 1978.

(g) PERSONNEL, FACILITIES, AND OTHER RESOURCES.—

(1) PERSONNEL.—The Inspector General may select, appoint, and employ such officers and employees as may be necessary for carrying out the duties of the Inspector General, subject to the provisions of title 5, United States Code, governing appointments in the competitive service, and the provisions of chapter 51 and subchapter III of chapter 53 of such title, relating to classification and General Schedule pay rates.

(2) EMPLOYMENT OF EXPERTS AND CONSULTANTS.—The Inspector General may obtain services as authorized by section 3109 of title 5, United States Code, at daily rates not to exceed the equivalent rate prescribed for grade GS–15 of the General Schedule by section 5332 of such title.

(3) CONTRACTING AUTHORITY.—To the extent and in such amounts as may be provided in advance by appropriations Acts, the Inspector General may enter into contracts and other arrangements for audits, studies, analyses, and other services with public agencies and with private persons, and make such payments as may be necessary to carry out the duties of the Inspector General.

(4) RESOURCES.—The Secretary of State shall provide the Inspector General with appropriate and adequate office space at appropriate United States Government locations in Afghanistan, together with such equipment, office supplies, and communications facilities and services as may be necessary for the operation of such offices, and shall provide necessary maintenance services for such offices and the equipment and facilities located therein. The Secretary of State shall not charge the Inspector General or employees of the Office of the Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction for International Cooperative Administrative Support Services.

(5) ASSISTANCE FROM FEDERAL AGENCIES.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Upon request of the Inspector General for information or assistance from any department, agency, or other entity of the Federal Government, the head of such entity shall, insofar as is practicable and not in contravention of any existing law, furnish such information or assistance to the Inspector General, or an authorized designee.

(B) REPORTING OF REFUSED ASSISTANCE.—Whenever information or assistance requested by the Inspector General is, in the judgment of the Inspector General, unreasonably refused or not provided, the Inspector General shall report the circumstances to the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of State and the appropriate committees of Congress without delay.

(h) REPORTS.—

(1) QUARTERLY REPORTS.—Not later than 30 days after the end of each fiscal-year quarter, the Inspector General shall submit to the appropriate congressional committees a report summarizing, for the period of that quarter and, to the extent possible, the period from the end of such quarter to the time of the submission of the report, the activities during such period of the Inspector General, including a summary of lessons learned, and summarizing the activities under programs and operations funded with amounts appropriated or otherwise made available for the reconstruction of Afghanistan. Each report shall include, for the period covered by such report, a detailed statement of all obligations, expenditures, and revenues of the United States Government associated with reconstruction and rehabilitation activities in Afghanistan, including the following information:

(A) Obligations and expenditures of appropriated funds.

(B) A project-by-project and program-by-program accounting of the costs incurred to date for the reconstruction of Afghanistan, together with the estimate of the costs to complete each project and each program.

(C) Revenues attributable to or consisting of funds provided by foreign nations or international organizations to programs and projects funded by the United States Government, and any obligations or expenditures of such revenues.

(D) Revenues attributable to or consisting of foreign assets seized or frozen that contribute to programs and projects funded by the United States Government, and any obligations or expenditures of such revenues.

(E) Operating expenses of agencies or entities receiving amounts appropriated or otherwise made available for the reconstruction of Afghanistan.

(F) In the case of any contract, grant, agreement, or other funding mechanism described in paragraph (2)—

(i) the amount of the contract, grant, agreement, or other funding mechanism;

(ii) a brief discussion of the scope of the contract, grant, agreement, or other funding mechanism;

(iii) a discussion of how the United States Government entity or entities involved in the contract or grant identified, and solicited offers from, potential contractors or grantees to perform the contract or grant, together with a list of the potential contractors or grantees that were issued solicitations for the offers;

(iv) the justification and approval documents on which was based the determination to use procedures other than procedures that provide for full and open competition; and

(v) a description of any previous instances of wasteful and fraudulent activities in Afghanistan by current or potential contractors, subcontactors, or grantees and whether and how they were held accountable.

(G) A description of any potential unethical or illegal actions taken by Federal employees, contractors, or affiliated entities in the course of reconstruction efforts.

(2) COVERED CONTRACTS, GRANTS, AGREEMENTS, AND FUNDING MECHANISMS.—A contract, grant, agreement, or other funding mechanism described in this paragraph is any major contract, grant, agreement, or other funding mechanism that is entered into by the United States Government with any public or private sector entity for any of the following purposes:

(A) To build or rebuild physical infrastructure of Afghanistan.

(B) To establish or reestablish a political or societal institution of Afghanistan.

(C) To provide products or services to the people of Afghanistan.

(3) SEMIANNUAL REPORT.—Not later than December 31, 2007, and semiannually thereafter, the Inspector General shall submit to the appropriate congressional committees a report meeting the requirements of section 5 of the Inspector General Act of 1978.

(4) PUBLIC TRANSPARENCY.—The Inspector General shall post each report required under this subsection on a public and searchable website not later than 7 days after the Inspector General submits the report to the appropriate congressional committees.

(5) LANGUAGES.—The Inspector General shall publish on a publicly available Internet website each report under this subsection in English and other languages that the Inspector General determines are widely used and understood in Afghanistan.

(6) FORM.—Each report submitted under this subsection shall be submitted in unclassified form, but may include a classified annex as the Inspector General determines necessary.

(7) LIMITATION ON PUBLIC DISCLOSURE OF CERTAIN INFORMATION.—Nothing in this subsection shall be construed to authorize the public disclosure of information that is—

(A) specifically prohibited from disclosure by any other provision of law;

(B) specifically required by Executive order to be protected from disclosure in the interest of national defense or national security or in the conduct of foreign affairs; or

(C) a part of an ongoing criminal investigation.

(i) WAIVER.—

(1) AUTHORITY.—The President may waive the requirement under paragraph (1) or (3) of subsection (h) for the inclusion in a report under such paragraph of any element otherwise provided for under such paragraph if the President determines that the waiver is justified for national security reasons.

(2) NOTICE OF WAIVER.—The President shall publish a notice of each waiver made under this subsection in the Federal Register not later than the date on which the report required under paragraph (1) or (3) of subsection (h) is submitted to the appropriate congressional committees. The report shall specify whether waivers under this subsection were made and with respect to which elements.

(j) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) AMOUNTS APPROPRIATED OR OTHERWISE MADE AVAILABLE FOR THE RECONSTRUCTION OF AFGHANISTAN.—The term ''amounts appropriated or otherwise made available for the reconstruction of Afghanistan'' means—

(A) amounts appropriated or otherwise made available for any fiscal year—

(i) to the Afghanistan Security Forces Fund;

(ii) to the program to assist the people of Afghanistan established under section 1202(a)(2) of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2006 (Public Law 109–163; 119 Stat. 3455); and

(iii) to the Department of Defense for assistance for the reconstruction of Afghanistan under any other provision of law; and

(B) amounts appropriated or otherwise made available for any fiscal year for Afghanistan reconstruction under the following headings or for the following purposes:

(i) Operating Expenses of the United States Agency for International Development.

(ii) Economic Support Fund.

(iii) International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement.

(iv) International Affairs Technical Assistance.

(v) Peacekeeping Operations.

(vi) Diplomatic and Consular Programs.

(vii) Embassy Security, Construction, and Maintenance.

(viii) Child Survival and Health.

(ix) Development Assistance.

(x) International Military Education and Training.

(xi) Nonproliferation, Anti-terrorism, Demining and Related Programs.

(xii) Public Law 480 Title II Grants.

(xiii) International Disaster and Famine Assistance.

(xiv) Migration and Refugee Assistance.

(xv) Operations of the Drug Enforcement Agency.

(2) APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES.—The term ''appropriate congressional committees'' means—

(A) the Committees on Appropriations, Armed Services, Foreign Relations, and Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs of the Senate; and

(B) the Committees on Appropriations, Armed Services, Foreign Affairs, and Homeland Security of the House of Representatives.

(3) EXECUTIVE AGENCY.—The term ''executive agency'' has the meaning given the term in section 105 of title 5, United States Code.

(k) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section $20,000,000 for fiscal year 2008 from any unobligated balances of any expired appropriation for the Department of Defense. These funds shall remain available until expended.

(l) TERMINATION.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction shall terminate 10 months after 80 percent of the funds appropriated or otherwise made available for the reconstruction of Afghanistan have been expended.

(2) FINAL ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT.—The Inspector General shall, prior to the termination of the Office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction under paragraph (1), prepare and submit to the appropriate congressional committees a final accountability report on all referrals for the investigation of any potential unethical or illegal actions of Federal employees, contractors, or affiliated entities made to the Department of Justice or any other United States law enforcement entity to ensure further investigations, prosecutions, or remedies.

SA 2151. Mr. FEINGOLD (for himself, Mr. GRASSLEY, and Mr. LIEBERMAN) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

On page 530, after line 18, insert the following:

DIVISION D—STUDY OF WARTIME TREATMENT OF CERTAIN PEOPLE

SEC. 4101. SHORT TITLE.

This division may be cited as the ''Wartime Treatment Study Act''.

SEC. 4102. FINDINGS.

Congress makes the following findings:

(1) During World War II, the United States Government deemed as ''enemy aliens'' more than 600,000 Italian-born and 300,000 German-born United States resident aliens and their families and required them to carry Certificates of Identification and limited their travel and personal property rights. At that time, these groups were the 2 largest foreign-born groups in the United States.

(2) During World War II, the United States Government arrested, interned, or otherwise detained thousands of European Americans, some remaining in custody for years after cessation of World War II hostilities, and repatriated, exchanged, or deported European Americans, including American-born children, to European Axis nations, many to be exchanged for Americans held in those nations.

(3) Pursuant to a policy coordinated by the United States with Latin American nations, many European Latin Americans, including German and Austrian Jews, were arrested, brought to the United States, and interned. Many were later expatriated, repatriated, or deported to European Axis nations during World War II, many to be exchanged for Americans and Latin Americans held in those nations.

(4) Millions of European Americans served in the armed forces and thousands sacrificed their lives in defense of the United States.

(5) The wartime policies of the United States Government were devastating to the Italian American and German American communities, individuals, and their families. The detrimental effects are still being experienced.

(6) Prior to and during World War II, the United States restricted the entry of Jewish refugees who were fleeing persecution or genocide and sought safety in the United States. During the 1930's and 1940's, the quota system, immigration regulations, visa requirements, and the time required to process visa applications affected the number of Jewish refugees, particularly those from Germany and Austria, who could gain admittance to the United States.

(7) The United States Government should conduct an independent review to fully assess and acknowledge these actions. Congress has previously reviewed the United States Government's wartime treatment of Japanese Americans through the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians. An independent review of the treatment of German Americans and Italian Americans and of Jewish refugees fleeing persecution and genocide has not yet been undertaken.

(8) Time is of the essence for the establishment of commissions, because of the increasing danger of destruction and loss of relevant documents, the advanced age of potential witnesses and, most importantly, the advanced age of those affected by the United States Government's policies. Many who suffered have already passed away and will never know of this effort.

SEC. 4103. DEFINITIONS.

In this division:

(1) DURING WORLD WAR II.—The term ''during World War II'' refers to the period between September 1, 1939, through December 31, 1948.

(2) EUROPEAN AMERICANS.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The term ''European Americans'' refers to United States citizens and resident aliens of European ancestry, including Italian Americans, German Americans, Hungarian Americans, Romanian Americans, and Bulgarian Americans.

(B) ITALIAN AMERICANS.—The term ''Italian Americans'' refers to United States citizens and resident aliens of Italian ancestry.

(C) GERMAN AMERICANS.—The term ''German Americans'' refers to United States citizens and resident aliens of German ancestry.

(3) EUROPEAN LATIN AMERICANS.—The term ''European Latin Americans'' refers to persons of European ancestry, including Italian or German ancestry, residing in a Latin American nation during World War II.

(4) LATIN AMERICAN NATION.—The term ''Latin American nation'' refers to any nation in Central America, South America, or the Caribbean.

TITLE I—COMMISSION ON WARTIME TREATMENT OF EUROPEAN AMERICANS

SEC. 4111. ESTABLISHMENT OF COMMISSION ON WARTIME TREATMENT OF EUROPEAN AMERICANS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—There is established the Commission on Wartime Treatment of European Americans (referred to in this title as the ''European American Commission'').

(b) MEMBERSHIP.—The European American Commission shall be composed of 7 members, who shall be appointed not later than 90 days after the date of enactment of this Act as follows:

(1) Three members shall be appointed by the President.

(2) Two members shall be appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, in consultation with the minority leader.

(3) Two members shall be appointed by the majority leader of the Senate, in consultation with the minority leader.

(c) TERMS.—The term of office for members shall be for the life of the European American Commission. A vacancy in the European American Commission shall not affect its powers, and shall be filled in the same manner in which the original appointment was made.

(d) REPRESENTATION.—The European American Commission shall include 2 members representing the interests of Italian Americans and 2 members representing the interests of German Americans.

(e) MEETINGS.—The President shall call the first meeting of the European American Commission not later than 120 days after the date of enactment of this Act.

(f) QUORUM.—Four members of the European American Commission shall constitute a quorum, but a lesser number may hold hearings.

(g) CHAIRMAN.—The European American Commission shall elect a Chairman and Vice Chairman from among its members. The term of office of each shall be for the life of the European American Commission.

(h) COMPENSATION.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Members of the European American Commission shall serve without pay.

(2) REIMBURSEMENT OF EXPENSES.—All members of the European American Commission shall be reimbursed for reasonable travel and subsistence, and other reasonable and necessary expenses incurred by them in the performance of their duties.

SEC. 4112. DUTIES OF THE EUROPEAN AMERICAN COMMISSION.

(a) IN GENERAL.—It shall be the duty of the European American Commission to review the United States Government's wartime treatment of European Americans and European Latin Americans as provided in subsection (b).

(b) SCOPE OF REVIEW.—The European American Commission's review shall include the following:

(1) A comprehensive review of the facts and circumstances surrounding United States Government actions during World War II with respect to European Americans and European Latin Americans pursuant to the Alien Enemies Acts (50 U.S.C. 21 et seq.), Presidential Proclamations 2526, 2527, 2655, 2662, and 2685, Executive Orders 9066 and 9095, and any directive of the United States Government pursuant to such law, proclamations, or executive orders respecting the registration, arrest, exclusion, internment, exchange, or deportation of European Americans and European Latin Americans. This review shall include an assessment of the underlying rationale of the United States Government's decision to develop related programs and policies, the information the United States Government received or acquired suggesting the related programs and policies were necessary, the perceived benefit of enacting such programs and policies, and the immediate and long-term impact of such programs and policies on European Americans and European Latin Americans and their communities.

(2) A comprehensive review of United States Government action during World War II with respect to European Americans and

European Latin Americans pursuant to the Alien Enemies Acts (50 U.S.C. 21 et seq.), Presidential Proclamations 2526, 2527, 2655, 2662, and 2685, Executive Orders 9066 and 9095, and any directive of the United States Government pursuant to such law, proclamations, or executive orders, including registration requirements, travel and property restrictions, establishment of restricted areas, raids, arrests, internment, exclusion, policies relating to the families and property that excludees and internees were forced to abandon, internee employment by American companies (including a list of such companies and the terms and type of employment), exchange, repatriation, and deportation, and the immediate and long-term effect of such actions, particularly internment, on the lives of those affected. This review shall include a list of—

(A) all temporary detention and long-term internment facilities in the United States and Latin American nations that were used to detain or intern European Americans and European Latin Americans during World War II (in this paragraph referred to as ''World War II detention facilities'');

(B) the names of European Americans and European Latin Americans who died while in World War II detention facilities and where they were buried;

(C) the names of children of European Americans and European Latin Americans who were born in World War II detention facilities and where they were born; and

(D) the nations from which European Latin Americans were brought to the United States, the ships that transported them to the United States and their departure and disembarkation ports, the locations where European Americans and European Latin Americans were exchanged for persons held in European Axis nations, and the ships that transported them to Europe and their departure and disembarkation ports.

(3) A brief review of the participation by European Americans in the United States Armed Forces including the participation of European Americans whose families were excluded, interned, repatriated, or exchanged.

(4) A recommendation of appropriate remedies, including how civil liberties can be protected during war, or an actual, attempted, or threatened invasion or incursion, an assessment of the continued viability of the Alien Enemies Acts (50 U.S.C. 21 et seq.), and public education programs related to the United States Government's wartime treatment of European Americans and European Latin Americans during World War II.

(c) FIELD HEARINGS.—The European American Commission shall hold public hearings in such cities of the United States as it deems appropriate.

(d) REPORT.—The European American Commission shall submit a written report of its findings and recommendations to Congress not later than 18 months after the date of the first meeting called pursuant to section 4111(e).

SEC. 4113. POWERS OF THE EUROPEAN AMERICAN COMMISSION.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The European American Commission or, on the authorization of the Commission, any subcommittee or member thereof, may, for the purpose of carrying out the provisions of this title, hold such hearings and sit and act at such times and places, and request the attendance and testimony of such witnesses and the production of such books, records, correspondence, memorandum, papers, and documents as the Commission or such subcommittee or member may deem advisable. The European American Commission may request the Attorney General to invoke the aid of an appropriate United States district court to require, by subpoena or otherwise, such attendance, testimony, or production.

(b) GOVERNMENT INFORMATION AND COOPERATION.—The European American Commission may acquire directly from the head of any department, agency, independent instrumentality, or other authority of the executive branch of the Government, available information that the European American Commission considers useful in the discharge of its duties. All departments, agencies, and independent instrumentalities, or other authorities of the executive branch of the Government shall cooperate with the European American Commission and furnish all information requested by the European American Commission to the extent permitted by law, including information collected under the Commission on Wartime and Internment of Civilians Act (Public Law 96–317; 50 U.S.C. App. 1981 note) and the Wartime Violation of Italian Americans Civil Liberties Act (Public Law 106–451; 50 U.S.C. App. 1981 note). For purposes of section 552a(b)(9) of title 5, United States Code (commonly known as the ''Privacy Act of 1974''), the European American Commission shall be deemed to be a committee of jurisdiction.

SEC. 4114. ADMINISTRATIVE PROVISIONS.

The European American Commission is authorized to—

(1) appoint and fix the compensation of such personnel as may be necessary, without regard to the provisions of title 5, United States Code, governing appointments in the competitive service, and without regard to the provisions of chapter 51 and subchapter III of chapter 53 of such title relating to classification and General Schedule pay rates, except that the compensation of any employee of the Commission may not exceed a rate equivalent to the rate payable under GS–15 of the General Schedule under section 5332 of such title;

(2) obtain the services of experts and consultants in accordance with the provisions of section 3109 of such title;

(3) obtain the detail of any Federal Government employee, and such detail shall be without reimbursement or interruption or loss of civil service status or privilege;

(4) enter into agreements with the Administrator of General Services for procurement of necessary financial and administrative services, for which payment shall be made by reimbursement from funds of the Commission in such amounts as may be agreed upon by the Chairman of the Commission and the Administrator;

(5) procure supplies, services, and property by contract in accordance with applicable laws and regulations and to the extent or in such amounts as are provided in appropriation Acts; and

(6) enter into contracts with Federal or State agencies, private firms, institutions, and agencies for the conduct of research or surveys, the preparation of reports, and other activities necessary to the discharge of the duties of the Commission, to the extent or in such amounts as are provided in appropriation Acts.

SEC. 4115. FUNDING.

Of the amounts authorized to be appropriated to the Department of Justice, $600,000 shall be available to carry out this title.

SEC. 4116. SUNSET.

The European American Commission shall terminate 60 days after it submits its report to Congress.

TITLE II—COMMISSION ON WARTIME TREATMENT OF JEWISH REFUGEES

SEC. 4121. ESTABLISHMENT OF COMMISSION ON WARTIME TREATMENT OF JEWISH REFUGEES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—There is established the Commission on Wartime Treatment of Jewish Refugees (referred to in this title as the ''Jewish Refugee Commission'').

(b) MEMBERSHIP.—The Jewish Refugee Commission shall be composed of 7 members, who shall be appointed not later than 90 days after the date of enactment of this Act as follows:

(1) Three members shall be appointed by the President.

(2) Two members shall be appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, in consultation with the minority leader.

(3) Two members shall be appointed by the majority leader of the Senate, in consultation with the minority leader.

(c) TERMS.—The term of office for members shall be for the life of the Jewish Refugee Commission. A vacancy in the Jewish Refugee Commission shall not affect its powers, and shall be filled in the same manner in which the original appointment was made.

(d) REPRESENTATION.—The Jewish Refugee Commission shall include 2 members representing the interests of Jewish refugees.

(e) MEETINGS.—The President shall call the first meeting of the Jewish Refugee Commission not later than 120 days after the date of enactment of this Act.

(f) QUORUM.—Four members of the Jewish Refugee Commission shall constitute a quorum, but a lesser number may hold hearings.

(g) CHAIRMAN.—The Jewish Refugee Commission shall elect a Chairman and Vice Chairman from among its members. The term of office of each shall be for the life of the Jewish Refugee Commission.

(h) COMPENSATION.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Members of the Jewish Refugee Commission shall serve without pay.

(2) REIMBURSEMENT OF EXPENSES.—All members of the Jewish Refugee Commission shall be reimbursed for reasonable travel and subsistence, and other reasonable and necessary expenses incurred by them in the performance of their duties.

SEC. 4122. DUTIES OF THE JEWISH REFUGEE COMMISSION.

(a) IN GENERAL.—It shall be the duty of the Jewish Refugee Commission to review the United States Government's refusal to allow Jewish and other refugees fleeing persecution or genocide in Europe entry to the United States as provided in subsection (b).

(b) SCOPE OF REVIEW.—The Jewish Refugee Commission's review shall cover the period between January 1, 1933, through December 31, 1945, and shall include, to the greatest extent practicable, the following:

(1) A review of the United States Government's decision to deny Jewish and other refugees fleeing persecution or genocide entry to the United States, including a review of the underlying rationale of the United States Government's decision to refuse the Jewish and other refugees entry, the information the United States Government received or acquired suggesting such refusal was necessary, the perceived benefit of such refusal, and the impact of such refusal on the refugees.

(2) A review of Federal refugee law and policy relating to those fleeing persecution or genocide, including recommendations for making it easier in the future for victims of persecution or genocide to obtain refuge in the United States.

(c) FIELD HEARINGS.—The Jewish Refugee Commission shall hold public hearings in such cities of the United States as it deems appropriate.

(d) REPORT.—The Jewish Refugee Commission shall submit a written report of its findings and recommendations to Congress not later than 18 months after the date of the first meeting called pursuant to section 4121(e).

SEC. 4123. POWERS OF THE JEWISH REFUGEE COMMISSION.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Jewish Refugee Commission or, on the authorization of the Commission, any subcommittee or member thereof, may, for the purpose of carrying out the provisions of this title, hold such hearings and sit and act at such times and places, and request the attendance and testimony of such witnesses and the production of such books, records, correspondence, memorandum, papers, and documents as the Commission or such subcommittee or member may deem advisable. The Jewish Refugee Commission may request the Attorney General to invoke the aid of an appropriate United States district court to require, by subpoena or otherwise, such attendance, testimony, or production.

(b) GOVERNMENT INFORMATION AND COOPERATION.—The Jewish Refugee Commission may acquire directly from the head of any department, agency, independent instrumentality, or other authority of the executive branch of the Government, available information that the Jewish Refugee Commission considers useful in the discharge of its duties. All departments, agencies, and independent instrumentalities, or other authorities of the executive branch of the Government shall cooperate with the Jewish Refugee Commission and furnish all information requested by the Jewish Refugee Commission to the extent permitted by law, including information collected as a result of the Commission on Wartime and Internment of Civilians Act (Public Law 96–317; 50 U.S.C. App. 1981 note) and the Wartime Violation of Italian Americans Civil Liberties Act (Public Law 106–451; 50 U.S.C. App. 1981 note). For purposes of section 552a(b)(9) of title 5, United States Code (commonly known as the ''Privacy Act of 1974''), the Jewish Refugee Commission shall be deemed to be a committee of jurisdiction.

SEC. 4124. ADMINISTRATIVE PROVISIONS.

The Jewish Refugee Commission is authorized to—

(1) appoint and fix the compensation of such personnel as may be necessary, without regard to the provisions of title 5, United States Code, governing appointments in the competitive service, and without regard to the provisions of chapter 51 and subchapter III of chapter 53 of such title relating to classification and General Schedule pay rates, except that the compensation of any employee of the Commission may not exceed a rate equivalent to the rate payable under GS–15 of the General Schedule under section 5332 of such title;

(2) obtain the services of experts and consultants in accordance with the provisions of section 3109 of such title;

(3) obtain the detail of any Federal Government employee, and such detail shall be without reimbursement or interruption or loss of civil service status or privilege;

(4) enter into agreements with the Administrator of General Services for procurement of necessary financial and administrative services, for which payment shall be made by reimbursement from funds of the Commission in such amounts as may be agreed upon by the Chairman of the Commission and the Administrator;

(5) procure supplies, services, and property by contract in accordance with applicable laws and regulations and to the extent or in such amounts as are provided in appropriation Acts; and

(6) enter into contracts with Federal or State agencies, private firms, institutions, and agencies for the conduct of research or surveys, the preparation of reports, and other activities necessary to the discharge of the duties of the Commission, to the extent or in such amounts as are provided in appropriation Acts.

SEC. 4125. FUNDING.

Of the amounts authorized to be appropriated to the Department of Justice, $600,000 shall be available to carry out this title.

SEC. 4126. SUNSET.

The Jewish Refugee Commission shall terminate 60 days after it submits its report to Congress.

SA 2152. Mr. BIDEN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the end of subtitle A of title X, add the following:

SEC. 1008. REPORT ON UNDERFUNDING OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE AND DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS FOR HEALTH CARE FOR ANY FISCAL YEAR IN WHICH THE ARMED FORCES ARE ENGAGED IN A MAJOR MILITARY CONFLICT.

(a) FINDINGS.—Congress makes the following findings:

(1) Pressure to reduce the amounts expended by the Department of Defense for health care has contributed to many of the current problems at Walter Reed Army Medical Center.

(2) It is inappropriate to reduce the amounts expended by the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs for health care while members of the Armed Forces or veterans who served in Iraq and Afghanistan require health care as a consequence of such service.

(b) REPORT REQUIRED FOR UNDERFUNDING.—If the Armed Forces are involved in a major military conflict when the President submits to Congress the budget for a fiscal year under section 1105 of title 31, United States Code, and the aggregate amount included in that budget for the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs for health care for such fiscal year is less than the aggregate amount provided by Congress for the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs for health care for such preceding fiscal year, the President shall submit to Congress a report on—

(1) the reasons for the determination that inclusion of a lesser aggregate amount is in the national interest; and

(2) the anticipated effects of the inclusion of such lesser aggregate amount on the access to and delivery of medical and support services to members of the Armed Forces, veterans, and their family members.

SA 2153. Mr. BIDEN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the end of subtitle D of title X, add the following:

SEC. 1044. STUDIES ON PRESUMPTION OF SERVICE CONNECTION FOR TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY IN MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES AND VETERANS WHO SERVED IN OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM OR OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM.

(a) FINDINGS.—Congress makes the following findings:

(1) Many of the members of the Armed Forces deployed in Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom have traumatic brain injuries.

(2) In many cases, such injuries are not diagnosed because there is no external indication of the injury.

(b) STUDIES ON TREATING TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY AS PRESUMPTIVE CONDITION FOR DISABILITY COMPENSATION.—

(1) STUDY BY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Defense shall conduct a study on the feasibility and advisability of establishing a presumption for treatment of traumatic brain injury in members of the Armed Forces who served in Operation Iraqi Freedom or Operation Enduring Freedom as a service-connected condition for purposes of disability compensation under the laws administered by the Secretary of Defense.

(B) REPORT.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Defense shall submit to Congress a report on the results of the study required by subparagraph (A).

(2) STUDY BY SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall conduct a study on the feasibility and advisability of establishing a presumption for treatment of traumatic brain injury in veterans who served in Operation Iraqi Freedom or Operation Enduring Freedom as a service-connected condition for purposes of disability compensation under the laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

(B) REPORT.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to Congress a report on the results of the study required by subparagraph (A).

(3) STUDY BY DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The Director of the National Institutes of Health shall conduct a study on traumatic brain injury, including the detection of traumatic brain injury and the measurement and classification of the severity of traumatic brain injury.

(B) REPORT.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Director of the National Institutes of Health shall submit to Congress a report on the results of the study required by subparagraph (A).

SA 2154. Mr. GRAHAM submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 2011 proposed by Mr. NELSON of Nebraska (for Mr. LEVIN) to the bill H.R. 1585, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; as follows:

At the end of subtitle E of title X, add the following:

SEC. 1070. TRAUMATIC SERVICEMEMBERS' GROUP LIFE INSURANCE.

(a) DESIGNATION OF FIDUCIARY FOR MEMBERS WITH LOST MENTAL CAPACITY OR EXTENDED LOSS OF CONSCIOUSNESS.—The Secretary of Defense shall, in consultation with

the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, develop a form for the designation of a recipient for the funds distributed under section 1980A of title 38, United States Code, as the fiduciary of a member of the Armed Forces in cases where the member is medically incapacitated (as determined by the Secretary of Defense in consultation with the Secretary of Veterans Affairs) or experiencing an extended loss of consciousness.

(b) ELEMENTS.—The form under subsection (a) shall require that a member may elect that—

(1) an individual designated by the member be the recipient as the fiduciary of the member; or

(2) a court of proper jurisdiction determine the recipient as the fiduciary of the member for purposes of this subsection.

(c) COMPLETION AND UPDATE.—The form under subsection (a) shall be completed by an individual at the time of entry into the Armed Forces and updated periodically thereafter.

SA 2155. Ms. SNOWE (for herself and Mrs. LINCOLN) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 2019 proposed by Mr. LEVIN (for himself and Mr. MCCAIN) to the amendment SA 2011 proposed by Mr. NELSON of Nebraska (for Mr. LEVIN) to the bill H.R. 1585, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

On page 23, between lines 6 and 7, insert the following:

(3) REPORT ON MODERNIZATION OF SCHEDULE FOR RATING DISABILITIES IN USE BY DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.—In addition to the report submitted under paragraph (1), the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall also submit to the appropriate committees of Congress a plan to update the schedule for rating disabilities in use by the Department of Veterans Affairs to reflect the effects of mental health disorders, including traumatic brian injury and post-traumatic stress disorder, on the modern workforce.

SA 2156. Ms. SNOWE (for herself and Mrs. LINCOLN) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 2019 proposed by Mr. LEVIN (for himself and Mr. MCCAIN) to the amendment SA 2011 proposed by Mr. NELSON of Nebraska (for Mr. LEVIN) to the bill H.R. 1585, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

On page 89, between lines 2 and 3, insert the following:

SEC. 1664. NO REDUCTION IN DISABILITY RATING.

A disability rating assigned to a member of the Armed Forces by an informal physical evaluation board of the Department of Defense may not be reduced upon appeal.

SA 2157. Ms. SNOWE (for herself and Mrs. LINCOLN) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 2019 proposed by Mr. LEVIN (for himself and Mr. MCCAIN) to the amendment SA 2011 proposed by Mr. NELSON of Nebraska (for Mr. LEVIN) to the bill H.R. 1585, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

On page 23, between lines 6 and 7, insert the following:

(3) PLAN FOR INDEPENDENT ADVOCATES FOR COVERED MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES.—In addition to the report submitted under paragraph (1), the Secretary of Defense shall also submit to the appropriate committees of Congress a report setting forth a plan to expand access to organizations recognized by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs for the representation of veterans under section 5902 of title 38, United States Code, to provide independent service member advocates to covered members of the Armed Forces, which advocates shall—

(A) not report to the Secretary of Defense in the performance of the duties as advocates;

(B) advise covered members of the Armed Forces on matters relating to the medical records and service records of such covered members of the Armed Forces; and

(C) provide covered members of the Armed Forces with such information as may be necessary for such covered members of the Armed Forces to prepare for reviews by physical evaluation boards.

SA 2158. Mr. NELSON of Nebraska (for Mr. JOHNSON) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by Mr. NELSON of Nebraska to the bill H.R. 1585, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the end of subtitle E of title V, add the following:

SECTION 565. HEAVILY IMPACTED LOCAL EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—For fiscal year 2008 and each succeeding fiscal year, the Secretary of Education shall—

(1) deem each local educational agency that was eligible to receive a fiscal year 2007 basic support payment for heavily impacted local educational agencies under section 8003(b)(2) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 7703(b)(2)) as eligible to receive a basic support payment for heavily impacted local educational agencies under such section for the fiscal year for which the determination is made under this subsection; and

(2) make a payment to such local educational agency under such section for such fiscal year.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATES.—Subsection (a) shall remain in effect until the date that a Federal statute is enacted authorizing the appropriations for, or duration of, any program under title VIII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 7701 et seq.) for fiscal year 2008 or any succeeding fiscal year.

SA 2159. Mr. NELSON of Nebraska (for himself and Mr. GRAHAM) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 2019 proposed by Mr. LEVIN (for himself and Mr. MCCAIN) to the amendment SA 2011 proposed by Mr. NELSON of Nebraska (for Mr. LEVIN) to the bill H.R. 1585, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; as follows:

At the end of part I of subtitle B of title XVI (as proposed to be added by the amendment), add the following:

SEC. 1622. REIMBURSEMENT OF CERTAIN FORMER MEMBERS OF THE UNIFORMED SERVICES WITH SERVICE-CONNECTED DISABILITIES FOR TRAVEL FOR FOLLOW-ON SPECIALTY CARE AND RELATED SERVICES.

(a) TRAVEL.—Section 1074i of title 10, United States Code, is amended—

(1) by redesignating subsection (b) as subsection (c); and

(2) by inserting after subsection (a) the following new subsection (b):

''(b) FOLLOW-ON SPECIALTY CARE AND RELATED SERVICES.—In any case in which a former member of a uniformed service who incurred a disability while on active duty in a combat zone or during performance of duty in combat related operations (as designated by the Secretary of Defense), and is entitled to retired or retainer pay, or equivalent pay, requires follow-on specialty care, services, or supplies related to such disability at a military treatment facility more than 100 miles from the location in which the former member resides, the Secretary shall provide reimbursement for reasonable travel expenses comparable to those provided under subsection (a) for the former member, and when accompaniment by an adult is necessary, for a spouse, parent, or guardian of the former member, or another member of the former member's family who is at least 21 years of age.''.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by subsection (a) shall take effect January 1, 2008, and shall apply with respect to travel that occurs on or after that date.

SA 2160. Mr. NELSON of Nebraska (for himself and Mr. GRAHAM) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 2019 proposed by Mr. LEVIN (for himself and Mr. MCCAIN) to the amendment SA 2011 proposed by Mr. NELSON of Nebraska (for Mr. LEVIN) to the bill H.R. 1585, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; as follows:

At the end of part II of subtitle B of title XVI (as proposed to be added by the amendment), add the following:

SEC. 1627. EXTENDED BENEFITS UNDER TRICARE FOR PRIMARY CAREGIVERS OF MEMBERS OF THE UNIFORMED SERVICES WHO INCUR A SERIOUS INJURY OR ILLNESS ON ACTIVE DUTY.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 1079(d) of title 10, United States Code, is amended—

(1) by redesignating paragraphs (2) and (3) as paragraphs (3) and (4), respectively; and

(2) by inserting after paragraph (1) the following new paragraph (2):

''(2)(A) Subject to such terms, conditions, and exceptions as the Secretary of Defense considers appropriate, the program of extended benefits for eligible dependents under this subsection shall include extended benefits for the primary caregivers of members of the uniformed services who incur a serious injury or illness on active duty.

''(B) The Secretary of Defense shall prescribe in regulations the individuals who shall be treated as the primary caregivers of a member of the uniformed services for purposes of this paragraph.

''(C) For purposes of this paragraph, a serious injury or illness, with respect to a member of the uniformed services, is an injury or illness that may render the member medically unfit to perform the duties of the member's office, grade, rank, or rating.''.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by subsection (a) shall take effect on January 1, 2008.

SA 2161. Mr. NELSON of Nebraska (for himself and Mr. GRAHAM) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the end of subtitle D of title V, add the following:

SEC. 555. REPEAL OF ANNUAL LIMIT ON NUMBER OF ROTC SCHOLARSHIPS UNDER ARMY RESERVE AND ARMY NATIONAL GUARD FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.

Section 2107a(h) of title 10, United States Code, is amended by striking ''not more than 416 cadets each year under this section, to include'' and inserting ''each year under this section''.

SA 2162. Ms. SNOWE (for herself and Mrs. LINCOLN) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 2019 proposed by Mr. LEVIN (for himself and Mr. MCCAIN) to the amendment SA 2011 proposed by Mr. NELSON of Nebraska (for Mr. LEVIN) to the bill H.R. 1585, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; as follows:

On page 23, between lines 6 and 7, insert the following:

(3) REPORT ON REDUCTION IN DISABILITY RATINGS BY THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE.

The Secretary of Defense shall submit a report to the Committees on Armed Services of the Senate and House of Representatives on the numbers of instances in which a disability rating assigned to a member of the Armed Forces by an informal physical evaluation board of the Department of Defense was reduced upon appeal, and the reasons for such reduction.

Such report shall cover the period beginning October 7, 2001 and ending September 30, 2006, and shall be submitted to the appropriate Committees of Congress by February 1, 2008.

SA 2163. Mrs. CLINTON (for herself and Ms. COLLINS) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by her to the bill H.R. 1585, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the end of subtitle H of title V, add the following:

SEC. 594. COLD WAR SERVICE MEDAL.

(a) AUTHORITY.—Chapter 57 of title 10, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

''§ 1135. Cold War service medal

''(a) MEDAL AUTHORIZED.—The Secretary concerned shall issue a service medal, to be known as the 'Cold War service medal', to persons eligible to receive the medal under subsection (b). The Cold War service medal shall be of an appropriate design approved by the Secretary of Defense, with ribbons, lapel pins, and other appurtenances.

''(b) ELIGIBLE PERSONS.—The following persons are eligible to receive the Cold War service medal:

''(1) A person who—

''(A) performed active duty or inactive duty training as an enlisted member during the Cold War;

''(B) completed the person's initial term of enlistment or, if discharged before completion of such initial term of enlistment, was honorably discharged after completion of not less than 180 days of service on active duty; and

''(C) has not received a discharge less favorable than an honorable discharge or a release from active duty with a characterization of service less favorable than honorable.

''(2) A person who—

''(A) performed active duty or inactive duty training as a commissioned officer or warrant officer during the Cold War;

''(B) completed the person's initial service obligation as an officer or, if discharged or separated before completion of such initial service obligation, was honorably discharged after completion of not less than 180 days of service on active duty; and

''(C) has not been released from active duty with a characterization of service less favorable than honorable and has not received a discharge or separation less favorable than an honorable discharge.

''(c) ONE AWARD AUTHORIZED.—Not more than one Cold War service medal may be issued to any person.

''(d) ISSUANCE TO REPRESENTATIVE OF DECEASED.—If a person described in subsection (b) dies before being issued the Cold War service medal, the medal shall be issued to the person's representative, as designated by the Secretary concerned.

''(e) REPLACEMENT.—Under regulations prescribed by the Secretary concerned, a Cold War service medal that is lost, destroyed, or rendered unfit for use without fault or neglect on the part of the person to whom it was issued may be replaced without charge.

''(f) APPLICATION FOR MEDAL.—The Cold War service medal shall be issued upon receipt by the Secretary concerned of an application for such medal, submitted in accordance with such regulations as the Secretary prescribes.

''(g) UNIFORM REGULATIONS.—The Secretary of Defense shall ensure that regulations prescribed by the Secretaries of the military departments under this section are uniform so far as is practicable.

''(h) COLD WAR DEFINED.—In this section, the term 'Cold War' means the period beginning on September 2, 1945, and ending at the end of December 26, 1991.''.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is amended by adding at the end the following new item:

''1135. Cold War service medal.''.

SA 2164. Mr. SMITH (for himself, Mr. HARKIN, Ms. COLLINS, and Mrs. LINCOLN) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the end of subtitle C of title X, add the following:

SEC. 1031. PILOT PROGRAM ON ASSISTING VETERANS ORGANIZATIONS IN FACILITATING COMMUNITY REINTEGRATION OF VETERANS.

(a) PROGRAM REQUIRED.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall carry out a pilot program to demonstrate and assess the feasibility and advisability of delivering community reintegration support and services to veterans by assisting veterans organizations in developing and promoting peer support programs for veterans.

(2) DESIGNATION.—The pilot program required by paragraph (1) shall be known as the ''Heroes Helping Heroes Program''.

(b) DURATION OF PROGRAM.—The pilot program shall be carried out during the three-year period beginning on October 1, 2007.

(c) SELECTION OF PILOT PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall select not more than 20 eligible entities to participate in the pilot program.

(2) APPLICATION.—Each eligible entity seeking to participate in the pilot program shall submit an application to the Secretary at such time, in such manner, and accompanied by such information as the Secretary shall require.

(3) SELECTION.—The Secretary shall select participants in the pilot program from among the applicants under paragraph (1) that the Secretary determines—

(A)(i) have existing peer support programs that can be expanded or enhanced, and resources, for the delivery of community reintegration support and services to veterans (including mentoring programs, self-help groups, and Internet and other electronic-based peer support resources) that are suitable for the pilot program; or

(ii) have the capacity, including the skill and resources necessary, to develop and maintain new peer support programs for the delivery of community reintegration support and services (including mentoring programs, self-help groups, and Internet and other electronic-based peer support resources) that are suitable for the pilot program; and

(B) have a plan to continue such peer support programs after the pilot program ends.

(d) GRANTS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall award grants to pilot program participants to develop and promote peer support programs that deliver community reintegration support and services for veterans.

(2) AMOUNT.—The Secretary shall ensure that the average amount of the grant awarded under paragraph (1) to a pilot program participant is not more than $300,000 and not less than $100,000 per fiscal year.

(3) MATCHING FUNDS.—A recipient of a grant under paragraph (1) shall contribute towards the development and promotion of peer support programs that deliver community reintegration support and services to veterans an amount equal to not less than ten percent of the grant awarded to such recipient.

(4) DURATION.—The duration of any grant awarded under paragraph (1) may not exceed three years.

(e) USE OF FUNDS.—A grant awarded to a pilot program participant pursuant to subsection (d) shall be used by the pilot program participant for costs and expenses connected with the development and promotion of peer support programs that deliver community reintegration support and services to veterans, including costs and expenses of the following:

(1) Program staff or a coordinator of volunteers, but not more than 50 percent of such grant award may be used for such purpose in any fiscal year of such pilot program.

(2) Consultation services, but not more than 20 percent of such grant award may be used for such purpose in any fiscal year of such pilot program.

(3) Program operations, including costs and expenses relating to the following:

(A) Advertising and recruiting.

(B) Printing.

(C) Training of volunteers, veterans, and staff.

(D) Incentives, such as food and awards.

(E) Overhead expenses, but not more than ten percent of such grant award may be used for such purposes.

(f) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.—In addition to the award of grants under subsection (d), the Secretary shall provide technical assistance to pilot program participants to assist them in developing and promoting peer support programs that deliver community reintegration support and services to veterans.

(g) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) ELIGIBLE ENTITY.—The term ''eligible entity'' means—

(A) a veterans service organization;

(B) a not-for-profit organization—

(i) the primary mission of which is to assist veterans;

(ii) that has been in continuous operation for at least 12 months; and

(iii) is not a veterans service organization; or

(C) a partnership between an organization described in subparagraph (A) or (B) and an organization that is not described in subparagraph (A) or (B).

(2) PILOT PROGRAM PARTICIPANT.—The term ''pilot program participant'' means an eligible entity that is selected by the Secretary, in accordance with subsection (c), to participate in the pilot program under this section.

(3) VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATION.—The term ''veterans service organization'' means any organization recognized by the Secretary for the representation of veterans under section 5902 of title 38, United States Code.

(h) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There are authorized to be appropriated to the Department of Veterans Affairs to carry out this section, $4,500,000 for each of fiscal years 2008, 2009, and 2010.

SA 2165. Mr. BOND (for himself and Mr. LEAHY) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the end of division A, add the following:

TITLE XVI—NATIONAL GUARD BUREAU MATTERS AND RELATED MATTERS

SEC. 1601. SHORT TITLE.

(a) SHORT TITLE.—This title may be cited as the ''National Guard Empowerment Act of 2007''.

(b) CONSTRUCTION WITH CERTAIN OTHER PROVISIONS.—Sections 532 and 533 of this Act, and the amendments made by such sections, shall not take effect.

SEC. 1602. EXPANDED AUTHORITY OF CHIEF OF THE NATIONAL GUARD BUREAU AND EXPANDED FUNCTIONS OF THE NATIONAL GUARD BUREAU.

(a) EXPANDED AUTHORITY.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Subsection (a) of section 10501 of title 10, United States Code, is amended by striking ''joint bureau of the Department of the Army and the Department of the Air Force'' and inserting ''joint activity of the Department of Defense''.

(2) PURPOSE.—Subsection (b) of such section is amended by striking ''between'' and all that follows and inserting ''between—

''(1)(A) the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the commanders of the combatant commands of the United States, and (B) the Department of the Army and the Department of the Air Force; and

''(2) the several States.''.

(b) ENHANCEMENTS OF POSITION OF CHIEF OF NATIONAL GUARD BUREAU.—

(1) ADVISORY FUNCTION ON NATIONAL GUARD MATTERS.—Subsection (c) of section 10502 of title 10, United States Code, is amended by inserting ''to the Secretary of Defense, to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff,'' after ''principal adviser''.

(2) MEMBER OF JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF.—(A) Such section is further amended—

(i) by redesignating subsections (d) and (e) as subsections (e) and (f), respectively; and

(ii) by inserting after subsection (c) the following new subsection (d):

''(d) MEMBER OF JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF.—The Chief of the National Guard Bureau shall perform the duties prescribed for him or her as a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff under section 151 of this title.''.

(B) Section 151(a) of such title is amended by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

''(7) The Chief of the National Guard Bureau.''.

(3) GRADE.—Subsection (e) of such section, as redesignated by paragraph (2)(A)(i) of this subsection, is further amended by striking ''lieutenant general'' and inserting ''general''.

(4) ANNUAL REPORT TO CONGRESS ON VALIDATED REQUIREMENTS.—Section 10504 of such title is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

''(c) ANNUAL REPORT ON VALIDATED REQUIREMENTS.—Not later than December 31 each year, the Chief of the National Guard Bureau shall submit to Congress a report on the following:

''(1) The requirements validated under section 10503a(b)(1) of this title during the preceding fiscal year.

''(2) The requirements referred to in paragraph (1) for which funding is to be requested in the next budget for a fiscal year under section 10544 of this title.

''(3) The requirements referred to in paragraph (1) for which funding will not be requested in the next budget for a fiscal year under section 10544 of this title.''.

(c) ENHANCEMENT OF FUNCTIONS OF NATIONAL GUARD BUREAU.—

(1) DEVELOPMENT OF CHARTER.—Section 10503 of title 10, United States Code, is amended—

(A) in the matter preceding paragraph (1), by striking ''The Secretary of the Army and the Secretary of the Air Force shall jointly develop'' and inserting ''The Secretary of Defense, in consultation with the Secretary of the Army and the Secretary of the Air Force, shall develop''; and

(B) in paragraph (12), by striking ''the Secretaries'' and inserting ''the Secretary of Defense''.

(2) ADDITIONAL GENERAL FUNCTIONS.—Such section is further amended—

(A) by redesignating paragraph (12), as amended by paragraph (1)(B) of this subsection, as paragraph (13); and

(B) by inserting after paragraph (11) the following new paragraph (12):

''(12) Facilitating and coordinating with other Federal agencies, and with the several States, the use of National Guard personnel and resources for and in contingency operations, military operations other than war, natural disasters, support of civil authorities, and other circumstances.''.

(3) MILITARY ASSISTANCE FOR CIVIL AUTHORITIES.—Chapter 1011 of such title is further amended by inserting after section 10503 the following new section:

''§ 10503a. Functions of National Guard Bureau: military assistance to civil authorities

''(a) IDENTIFICATION OF ADDITIONAL NECESSARY ASSISTANCE.—The Chief of the National Guard Bureau shall—

''(1) identify gaps between Federal and State capabilities to prepare for and respond to emergencies; and

''(2) make recommendations to the Secretary of Defense on programs and activities of the National Guard for military assistance to civil authorities to address such gaps.

''(b) SCOPE OF RESPONSIBILITIES.—In meeting the requirements of subsection (a), the Chief of the National Guard Bureau shall, in coordination with the adjutants general of the States, have responsibilities as follows:

''(1) To validate the requirements of the several States and Territories with respect to military assistance to civil authorities.

''(2) To develop doctrine and training requirements relating to the provision of military assistance to civil authorities.

''(3) To acquire equipment, materiel, and other supplies and services for the provision of military assistance to civil authorities.

''(4) To assist the Secretary of Defense in preparing the budget required under section 10544 of this title.

''(5) To administer amounts provided the National Guard for the provision of military assistance to civil authorities.

''(6) To carry out any other responsibility relating to the provision of military assistance to civil authorities as the Secretary of Defense shall specify.

''(c) ASSISTANCE.—The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff shall assist the Chief of the National Guard Bureau in carrying out activities under this section.

''(d) CONSULTATION.—The Chief of the National Guard Bureau shall carry out activities under this section in consultation with the Secretary of the Army and the Secretary of the Air Force.''.

(4) BUDGETING FOR TRAINING AND EQUIPMENT FOR MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO CIVIL AUTHORITIES AND OTHER DOMESTIC MISSIONS.—Chapter 1013 of title 10, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

"§ 10544. National Guard training and equipment: budget for military assistance to civil authorities and for other domestic operations

''(a) IN GENERAL.—The budget justification documents materials submitted to Congress in support of the budget of the President for a fiscal year (as submitted with the budget of the President under section 1105(a) of title 31) shall specify separate amounts for training and equipment for the National Guard for purposes of military assistance to civil authorities and for other domestic operations during such fiscal year.

''(b) SCOPE OF FUNDING.—The amounts specified under subsection (a) for a fiscal year shall be sufficient for purposes as follows:

''(1) The development and implementation of doctrine and training requirements applicable to the assistance and operations described in subsection (a) for such fiscal year.

''(2) The acquisition of equipment, materiel, and other supplies and services necessary for the provision of such assistance and such operations in such fiscal year.''.

(5) LIMITATION ON INCREASE IN PERSONNEL OF NATIONAL GUARD BUREAU.—The Secretary of Defense shall, to the extent practicable, ensure that no additional personnel are assigned to the National Guard Bureau in order to address administrative or other requirements arising out of the amendments made by this subsection.

(d) CONFORMING AND CLERICAL AMENDMENTS.—

(1) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—The heading of section 10503 of title 10, United States Code, is amended to read as follows:

"§ 10503. Functions of National Guard Bureau: charter".

(2) CLERICAL AMENDMENTS.—(A) The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 1011 of such title is amended by striking the item relating to section 10503 and inserting the following new items:

''10503. Functions of National Guard Bureau: charter.

''10503a. Functions of National Guard Bureau: military assistance to civil authorities.''.

(B) The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 1013 of such title is amended by adding at the end the following new item:

''10544. National Guard training and equipment: budget for military assistance to civil authorities and for other domestic operations.''.

SEC. 1603. PROMOTION OF ELIGIBLE RESERVE OFFICERS TO LIEUTENANT GENERAL AND VICE ADMIRAL GRADES ON THE ACTIVE-DUTY LIST.

(a) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of Congress that, whenever officers are considered for promotion to the grade of lieutenant general, or vice admiral in the case of the Navy, on the active duty list, officers of the reserve components of the Armed Forces who are eligible for promotion to such grade should be considered for promotion to such grade.

(b) PROPOSAL.—The Secretary of Defense shall submit to Congress a proposal for mechanisms to achieve the objective specified in subsection (a). The proposal shall include such recommendations for legislative or administrative action as the Secretary considers appropriate in order to achieve that objective.

(c) NOTICE ACCOMPANYING NOMINATIONS.—The President shall include with each nomination of an officer to the grade of lieutenant general, or vice admiral in the case of the Navy, on the active-duty list that is submitted to the Senate for consideration a certification that all reserve officers who were eligible for consideration for promotion to such grade were considered in the making of such nomination.

SEC. 1604. PROMOTION OF RESERVE OFFICERS TO LIEUTENANT GENERAL GRADE.

(a) TREATMENT OF SERVICE AS ADJUTANT GENERAL AS JOINT DUTY EXPERIENCE.—

(1) DIRECTORS OF ARMY AND AIR NATIONAL GUARD.—Section 10506(a)(3) of title 10, United States Code, is amended—

(A) by redesignating subparagraphs (C), (D), and (E) as subparagraphs (D), (E), and (F), respectively; and

(B) by inserting after subparagraph (B) the following new subparagraph (C):

''(C) Service of an officer as adjutant general shall be treated as joint duty experience for purposes of subparagraph (B)(ii).''.

(2) OTHER OFFICERS.—The service of an officer of the Armed Forces as adjutant general, or as an officer (other than adjutant general) of the National Guard of a State who performs the duties of adjutant general under the laws of such State, shall be treated as joint duty or joint duty experience for purposes of any provisions of law required such duty or experience as a condition of promotion.

(b) REPORTS ON PROMOTION OF RESERVE MAJOR GENERALS TO LIEUTENANT GENERAL GRADE.—

(1) REVIEW REQUIRED.—The Secretary of the Army and the Secretary of the Air Force shall each conduct a review of the promotion practices of the military department concerned in order to identify and assess the practices of such military department in the promotion of reserve officers from major general grade to lieutenant general grade.

(2) REPORTS.—Not later than 60 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of the Army and the Secretary of the Air Force shall each submit to the congressional defense committees a report on the review conducted by such official under paragraph (1). Each report shall set forth—

(A) the results of such review; and

(B) a description of the actions intended to be taken by such official to encourage and facilitate the promotion of additional reserve officers from major general grade to lieutenant general grade.

SEC. 1605. REQUIREMENT THAT POSITION OF DEPUTY COMMANDER OF THE UNITED STATES NORTHERN COMMAND BE FILLED BY A QUALIFIED NATIONAL GUARD OFFICER.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The position of Deputy Commander of the United States Northern Command shall be filled by a qualified officer of the National Guard who is eligible for promotion to the grade of lieutenant general.

(b) PURPOSE.—The purpose of the requirement in subsection (a) is to ensure that information received from the National Guard Bureau regarding the operation of the National Guard of the several States is integrated into the plans and operations of the United States Northern Command.

SEC. 1606. REQUIREMENT FOR SECRETARY OF DEFENSE TO PREPARE ANNUAL PLAN FOR RESPONSE TO NATURAL DISASTERS AND TERRORIST EVENTS.

(a) REQUIREMENT FOR ANNUAL PLAN.—Not later than March 1, 2008, and each March 1 thereafter, the Secretary of Defense, in consultation with the commander of the United States Northern Command and the Chief of the National Guard Bureau, shall prepare and submit to Congress a plan for coordinating the use of the National Guard and members of the Armed Forces on active duty when responding to natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters as identified in the national planning scenarios described in subsection (e).

(b) INFORMATION TO BE PROVIDED TO SECRETARY.—To assist the Secretary of Defense in preparing the plan, the National Guard Bureau, pursuant to its purpose as channel of communications as set forth in section 10501(b) of title 10, United States Code, shall provide to the Secretary information gathered from Governors, adjutants general of States, and other State civil authorities responsible for homeland preparation and response to natural and man-made disasters.

(c) TWO VERSIONS.—The plan shall set forth two versions of response, one using only members of the National Guard, and one using both members of the National Guard and members of the regular components of the Armed Forces.

(d) MATTERS COVERED.—The plan shall cover, at a minimum, the following:

(1) Protocols for the Department of Defense, the National Guard Bureau, and the Governors of the several States to carry out operations in coordination with each other and to ensure that Governors and local communities are properly informed and remain in control in their respective States and communities.

(2) An identification of operational procedures, command structures, and lines of communication to ensure a coordinated, efficient response to contingencies.

(3) An identification of the training and equipment needed for both National Guard personnel and members of the Armed Forces on active duty to provide military assistance to civil authorities and for other domestic operations to respond to hazards identified in the national planning scenarios.

(e) NATIONAL PLANNING SCENARIOS.—The plan shall provide for response to the following hazards:

(1) Nuclear detonation, biological attack, biological disease outbreak/pandemic flu, the plague, chemical attack-blister agent, chemical attack-toxic industrial chemicals, chemical attack-nerve agent, chemical attack-chlorine tank explosion, major hurricane, major earthquake, radiological attack-radiological dispersal device, explosives attack-bombing using improvised explosive device, biological attack-food contamination, biological attack-foreign animal disease and cyber attack.

(2) Any other hazards identified in a national planning scenario developed by the Homeland Security Council.

SEC. 1607. ADDITIONAL REPORTING REQUIREMENTS RELATING TO NATIONAL GUARD EQUIPMENT.

Section 10541 of title 10, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

''(d) Each report under this section concerning equipment of the National Guard shall also include the following:

''(1) A statement of the accuracy of the projections required by subsection (b)(5)(D) contained in earlier reports under this section, and an explanation, if the projection was not met, of why the projection was not met.

''(2) A certification from the Chief of the National Guard Bureau setting forth an inventory for the preceding fiscal year of each item of equipment—

''(A) for which funds were appropriated;

''(B) which was due to be procured for the National Guard during that fiscal year; and

''(C) which has not been received by a National Guard unit as of the close of that fiscal year.''.

SA 2166. Mr. SMITH submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by her to the bill H.R. 1585, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction,

and for defense activiites of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the end of title XII, add the following:

Subtitle D—Other Matters

SEC. 1241. IRAN COUNTER-PROLIFERATION SANCTIONS.

(a) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—The following is the sense of Congress:

(1) The United States should pursue vigorously all measures in the international financial sector to restrict Iran's ability to conduct international financial transactions, including prohibiting banks in the United States from handling indirect transactions with Iran's state-owned banks and prohibiting financial institutions that operate in United States currency from engaging in dollar transactions with Iranian institutions.

(2) The United States should take all possible measures to discourage and, if possible, prevent foreign banks from providing export credit guarantees to foreign entities seeking to invest in Iran.

(3) Iran should comply fully with its obligations under United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1737 (2006) and 1747 (2007), and any subsequent United Nations resolutions related to Iran's nuclear program, and in particular the requirement to suspend without delay all enrichment-related and reprocessing activities, including research and development, and all work on all heavy water-related nuclear activities, including research and development.

(4) The United Nations Security Council should take further measures beyond Resolutions 1737 and 1747 to tighten sanctions on Iran, including preventing new investment in Iran's energy sector and mandating the reduction of government-backed export credit guarantees, as long as Iran fails to comply with the demand of the international community to halt its nuclear enrichment campaign.

(5) The United States should encourage foreign governments to direct state-owned entities to cease all investment in Iran's energy sector and all imports to and exports from Iran of refined petroleum products and to persuade, and, where possible, require private entities based in their territories to cease all investment in Iran's energy sector and all imports to and exports from Iran of refined petroleum products.

(6) Administrators of Federal and State pension plans should divest all assets or holdings from foreign companies and entities that have invested or invest in the future in Iran's energy sector.

(7) Iranian state-owned banks should not be permitted to use the banking system of the United States.

(8) The Secretary of State should designate the Iranian Revolutionary Guards as a Foreign Terrorist Organization under section 219 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1189) and the Secretary of the Treasury should place the Iranian Revolutionary Guards on the list of Specially Designated Global Terrorists under Executive Order 13224 (50 U.S.C. 1701 note; relating to blocking property and prohibiting transactions with persons who commit, threaten to commit, or support terrorism).

(b) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES.—The term ''appropriate congressional committees'' has the meaning given that term in section 14(2) of the Iran Sanctions Act of 1996 (Public Law 104–172; 50 U.S.C. 1701 note).

(2) INVESTMENT.—The term ''investment'' has the meaning given that term in section 14(9) of the Iran Sanctions Act of 1996 (Public Law 104–172; 50 U.S.C. 1701 note).

(3) IRANIAN DIPLOMATS AND REPRESENTATIVES OF OTHER GOVERNMENT AND MILITARY OR QUASI-GOVERNMENTAL INSTITUTIONS OF IRAN.—The term ''Iranian diplomats and representatives of other government and military or quasi-governmental institutions of Iran'' has the meaning given that term in section 14(11) of the Iran Sanctions Act of 1996 (Public Law 104–172; 50 U.S.C. 1701 note).

(4) FAMILY MEMBER.—The term ''family member'' means, with respect to an individual, the spouse, children, grandchildren, or parents of the individual.

(5) MEDICINE.—The term ''medicine'' has the meaning given the term ''drug'' in section 321 of title 21, United States Code.

(c) CLARIFICATION AND EXPANSION OF DEFINITIONS.—

(1) PERSON.—Section 14(13)(B) of the Iran Sanctions Act of 1996 (Public Law 104–172; 50 U.S.C. 1701 note) is amended—

(A) by inserting ''financial institution, insurer, underwriter, guarantor, and other business organization, including any foreign subsidiary, parent, or affiliate of the foregoing,'' after ''trust,''; and

(B) by inserting '', such as an export credit agency'' before the semicolon.

(2) PETROLEUM RESOURCES.—Section 14(14) of the Iran Sanctions Act of 1996 (Public Law 104–172; 50 U.S.C. 1701 note) is amended by striking ''petroleum and natural gas resources'' and inserting ''petroleum, petroleum by-products, liquefied natural gas, oil or liquefied natural gas, oil or liquefied natural gas tankers, and products used to construct or maintain pipelines used to transport oil or liquefied natural gas''.

(d) RUSSIA NUCLEAR COOPERATION.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, and in addition to any other sanction in effect, beginning on the date that is 15 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the sanctions described in paragraph (2) shall apply with respect to Russia, unless the President makes a certification to Congress described in paragraph (3).

(2) SANCTIONS.—The sanctions described in this paragraph are the following:

(A) AGREEMENTS.—The United States may not enter into an agreement for cooperation with Russia pursuant to section 123 of the Atomic Energy Act of 1954 (42 U.S.C. 2153).

(B) LICENSES TO EXPORT NUCLEAR MATERIAL, FACILITIES, OR COMPONENTS.—The United States may not issue a license to export directly or indirectly to Russia any nuclear material, facilities, components, or other goods, services, or technology that would be subject to an agreement under section 123 of the Atomic Energy Act of 1954 (42 U.S.C. 2153).

(C) TRANSFERS OF NUCLEAR MATERIAL, FACILITIES, OR COMPONENTS.—The United States may not approve the transfer or retransfer directly or indirectly to Russia of any nuclear material, facilities, components, or other goods, services, or technology that would be subject to an agreement under section 123 of the Atomic Energy Act of 1954 (42 U.S.C. 2153).

(3) CERTIFICATION.—The certification described in this paragraph means a certification made by the President to Congress on or after the date that is 15 days after the date of the enactment of this Act that the President has determined that—

(A) Russia has suspended all nuclear assistance to Iran and all transfers of advanced conventional weapons and missiles to Iran; or

(B) Iran has completely, verifiably, and irreversibly dismantled all nuclear enrichment-related and reprocessing-related programs.

(4) TERMINATION OF SANCTIONS.—The sanctions described in paragraph (2) shall remain in effect until such time as the President makes the certification to Congress described in paragraph (3).

(5) RECERTIFICATION.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 1 year after the date on which the President makes a certification under paragraph (3), and annually thereafter, the President shall recertify that the President has determined that Russia has not resumed nuclear assistance to Iran or transfers of advanced conventional weapons or missiles to Iran.

(B) EFFECT OF FAILURE TO RECERTIFY.—If the President does not make the recertification under subparagraph (A) within 1 year of making the certification described in paragraph (3), the sanctions described in paragraph (2) shall apply with respect to Russia until the President makes such recertification.

(e) ECONOMIC SANCTIONS RELATING TO IRAN.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, and in addition to any other sanction in effect, beginning on the date that is 15 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the sanctions described in paragraph (2) shall apply with respect to Iran, unless the President makes a certification to Congress described in paragraph (3).

(2) SANCTIONS.—The sanctions described in this paragraph are the following:

(A) PROHIBITION ON IMPORTS.—No article that originates in Iran may be imported into the United States.

(B) PROHIBITION ON EXPORTS.—

(i) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in clause (ii), no article that originates in the United States may be exported to Iran.

(ii) EXCEPTION FOR FOOD, ANIMAL FEED, AND MEDICINE.—The prohibition in clause (i) does not apply to exports to Iran of food, animal feed, or medicine that originate in the United States.

(C) TRADE PREFERENCES.—The United States Trade Representative or any other Federal official may not take any action that would extend a unilateral trade preference to any article that originates from—

(i) Iran; or

(ii) any other country that is determined by the Secretary of State to be—

(I) engaged in nuclear cooperation with Iran, including the transfer or sale of any item, material, goods, or technology that can contribute to uranium enrichment or nuclear reprocessing activities of Iran; or

(II) contributing to the ballistic missile programs of Iran.

(D) ACCESSION TO WTO.—The United States Trade Representative or any other Federal official may not take any action that would lead to the accession of Iran to the World Trade Organization.

(E) FREEZING ASSETS.—

(i) IN GENERAL.—At such time as the United States has access to the names of Iranian diplomats and representatives of other government and military or quasi-governmental institutions of Iran, the President shall take such action as may be necessary to freeze immediately the funds and other assets belonging to anyone so named, the family members of those so named, and any associates of those so named to whom assets or property of those so named were transferred on or after January 1, 2007. The action described in the preceding sentence includes requiring any United States financial institution that holds funds and assets of a person so named to report promptly to the Office of Foreign Assets Control information regarding such funds and assets.

(ii) ASSET REPORTING REQUIREMENT.—Not later than 14 days after a decision is made to

freeze the property or assets of any person under this paragraph, the President shall report the name of such person to the appropriate congressional committees.

(F) UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS.—The United States Government may not procure, or enter into a contract for the procurement of, any goods or services from a person that meets the criteria for the imposition of sanctions under section 5(a) of the Iran Sanctions Act of 1996 (Public Law 104–172; 50 U.S.C. 1701 note).

(3) CERTIFICATION DESCRIBED.—The certification described in this paragraph means a certification made by the President to Congress beginning on the date that is 15 days after the date of the enactment of this Act that the President has determined that Iran has completely, verifiably, and irreversibly dismantled all nuclear enrichment-related and reprocessing-related programs.

(4) TERMINATION OF SANCTIONS.—The sanctions described in paragraph (2) shall remain in effect until such time as the President makes the certification to Congress described in paragraph (3).

(f) WORLD BANK LOANS TO IRAN.—

(1) REPORT.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, and every 180 days thereafter, the Secretary of the Treasury shall submit to the appropriate congressional committees a report on—

(A) the number of loans provided by the World Bank to Iran;

(B) the dollar amount of such loans; and

(C) the voting record of each member of the World Bank on such loans.

(2) REDUCTION OF CONTRIBUTION OF THE UNITED STATES.—The President shall reduce the amount to be paid on behalf of the United States to the World Bank for fiscal year 2008, and each fiscal year thereafter, by an amount equal to the amount that bears the same ratio to the total amount appropriated for the World Bank for that fiscal year as—

(A) the total amount provided by the Bank to entities in Iran, and for projects and activities in Iran, in the preceding fiscal year, bears to

(B) the total amount provided by the Bank to all entities, and for all projects and activities, in the preceding fiscal year.

(3) ALLOCATION OF AMOUNTS NOT CONTRIBUTED TO THE WORLD BANK.—There is authorized to be appropriated to the United States Agency for International Development for fiscal year 2008, and each fiscal year thereafter, an amount equal to the amount by which the total payment of the United States to the World Bank is reduced for that fiscal year as a result of the application of paragraph (2). Funds appropriated pursuant to this subsection shall be made available for the Child Survival and Health Programs Fund to carry out programs relating to maternal and child health, vulnerable children, and infectious diseases other than HIV/AIDS.

(g) INCREASED CAPACITY FOR EFFORTS TO COMBAT UNLAWFUL OR TERRORIST FINANCING.—

(1) FINDINGS.—The work of the Office of Terrorism and Financial Intelligence of the Department of Treasury, which includes the Office of Foreign Assets Control and the Financial Crimes Enforcement Network, is critical to ensuring that the international financial system is not used for purposes of supporting terrorism and developing weapons of mass destruction.

(2) AUTHORIZATION.—There are authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary of the Treasury for the Office of Terrorism and Financial Intelligence—

(A) $59,466,000 for fiscal year 2008; and

(B) such sums as may be necessary for each of the fiscal years 2009 and 2010.

(3) AUTHORIZATION AMENDMENT.—Section 310(d)(1) of title 31, United States Code, is amended by striking ''such sums as may be necessary for fiscal years 2002, 2003, 2004, and 2005'' and inserting ''$85,844,000 for fiscal year 2008 and such sums as may be necessary for each of the fiscal years 2009 and 2010''.

(h) NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATE ON IRAN.—As required under section 1213 of the John Warner National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2007 (Public Law 109–364; 120 Stat. 2422), the Director of National Intelligence shall submit to Congress an updated, comprehensive National Intelligence Estimate on Iran.

(i) EXCHANGE PROGRAMS WITH THE PEOPLE OF IRAN.—

(1) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of Congress that the United States should seek to enhance its friendship with the people of Iran, particularly by identifying young people of Iran to come to the United States under United States exchange programs.

(2) EXCHANGE PROGRAMS AUTHORIZED.—The President is authorized to carry out exchange programs with the people of Iran, particularly the young people of Iran. Such programs shall be carried out to the extent practicable in a manner consistent with the eligibility for assistance requirements specified in section 302(b) of the Iran Freedom Support Act (Public Law 109–293; 120 Stat. 1348).

(3) AUTHORIZATION.—Of the amounts available under the heading ''Educational and Cultural Exchange Programs'', under the heading ''Administration of Foreign Affairs'', under title IV of the Science, State, Justice, Commerce, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2006 (Public Law 109–108; 119 Stat. 2321), there are authorized to be appropriated to the President to carry out this section $10,000,000 for fiscal year 2008.

(j) RADIO BROADCASTING TO IRAN.—The Broadcasting Board of Governors shall devote a greater proportion of the programming of the Radio Farda service to programs offering news and analysis to further the open communication of information and ideas to Iran.

(k) INTERNATIONAL REGIME FOR THE ASSURED SUPPLY OF NUCLEAR FUEL FOR PEACEFUL MEANS.—

(1) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of Congress that—

(A) the Concept for a Multilateral Mechanism for Reliable Access to Nuclear Fuel, proposed by the United States, France, the Russian Federation, the Federal Republic of Germany, the United Kingdom, and the Netherlands on May 31, 2006, is welcome and should be expanded upon at the earliest possible opportunity;

(B) the proposal by the Government of the Russian Federation to bring one of its uranium enrichment facilities under international management and oversight is also a welcome development and should be encouraged by the United States;

(C) the offer by the Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI) of $50,000,000 in funds to support the creation of an international nuclear fuel bank by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is also welcome, and the United States and other member states of the IAEA should pledge collectively at least an additional $100,000,000 in matching funds to fulfill the NTI proposal; and

(D) the Global Nuclear Energy Partnership, initiated by President Bush in January 2006, is intended to provide a reliable fuel supply throughout the fuel cycle and promote the nonproliferation goals of the United States.

(2) POLICY.—It is the policy of the United States to support the establishment of an international regime for the assured supply of nuclear fuel for peaceful means under a multilateral authority, such as the International Atomic Energy Agency.

(l) REPORTING REQUIREMENTS.—

(1) FOREIGN INVESTMENT IN IRAN.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, and every 180 days thereafter, the Secretary of the Treasury shall submit to the appropriate congressional committees a report on—

(A) any foreign investments made in Iran's energy sector since January 1, 2007; and

(B) the determination of the President on whether each such investment qualifies as a sanctionable offense under section 5(a) of the Iran Sanctions Act of 1996 (Public Law 104–172; 50 U.S.C. 1701 note).

(2) INVESTMENT BY UNITED STATES COMPANIES IN IRAN.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, and annually thereafter, the Secretary of the Treasury shall report to the appropriate congressional committees the names of persons that have operations or conduct business in the United States that have invested in Iran and the dollar amount of each such investment.

(3) INVESTMENT BY FEDERAL THRIFT SAVINGS PLAN IN IRAN.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, and annually thereafter, the Executive Director of the Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board shall report to the appropriate congressional committees on any investment in entities that invest in Iran from the Thrift Savings Fund established under section 8437 of title 5, United States Code.

(4) LIST OF DESIGNATED FOREIGN TERRORIST ORGANIZATIONS.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of State and the Secretary of the Treasury shall report to the appropriate congressional committees on the efforts of the Secretary of State and the Secretary of the Treasury to place the Iranian Revolutionary Guards on the list of designated Foreign Terrorist Organizations under section 219 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1189) and the list of Specially Designated Global Terrorists under Executive Order 13224 (50 U.S.C. 1701 note; relating to blocking property and prohibiting transactions with persons who commit, threaten to commit, or support terrorism).

(5) ESTABLISHMENT OF INTERNATIONAL REGIME.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the President shall submit to the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate a report on the activities of the United States to support the establishment of an international regime for the assured supply of nuclear fuel for peaceful means under a multilateral authority, such as the International Atomic Energy Agency.

(6) EXPORT CREDITS.—Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, and every 90 days thereafter, the Secretary of the Treasury shall report to the appropriate congressional committees on any guarantee or extension of credit by foreign banks to persons investing in the energy sector of Iran, and any fines, restrictions, or other actions taken by the President to discourage or prevent such guarantees or extensions of credit.

SA 2167. Mr. GRASSLEY (for himself, Ms. STABENOW, and Mr. HARKIN) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel

strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

On page 199, after line 8, insert the following:

(c) CIVILIAN AGENCIES.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 60 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, governmentwide regulations for the purchase of products or services offered by Federal Prison Industries by civilian agencies shall be revised to establish procedures, standards, and limitations consistent with those established in section 2410n of title 10, United States Code, as amended by this section.

(2) SIGNIFICANT SHARE.—For the purposes of purchases by Federal agencies other than the Department of Defense, Federal Prison Industries shall be treated as having a significant share of the market of a product under regulations required by this section if the Administrator for Federal Procurement Policy determines that the Federal Prison Industries' share of the governmentwide market for the category of products including such product is greater than 5 percent.

SA 2168. Mr. SESSIONS submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the end of subtitle D at title I, add the following:

SEC. 143. SENSE OF CONGRESS ON THE PROCUREMENT PROGRAM FOR THE KC–X TANKER AIRCRAFT.

(a) FINDINGS.—Congress makes the following findings:

(1) Aerial refueling is a critically important force multiplier for the Air Force.

(2) The KC–X tanker aircraft procurement program is the number one acquisition and recapitalization priority of the Air Force.

(3) Given the competing budgetary requirements of the other Armed Forces and other sectors of the Federal Government, the Air Force needs to modernize at the most cost effective price.

(4) Competition in defense procurement provides the Armed Forces with the best products at the best price.

(b) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of Congress that the Air Force should—

(1) hold a full and open competition to choose the best possible joint aerial refueling capability at the most reasonable price; and

(2) be discouraged from taking any actions that would limit the ability of either of the teams seeking the contract for the procurement of KC–X tanker aircraft from competing for that contract.

SA 2169. Mr. WHITEHOUSE (for himself, Mr. DURBIN, Ms. MIKULSKI, Mr. FEINGOLD, and Mrs. FEINSTEIN) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. ____. NOTIFICATION OF CONGRESS OF DENIAL OF ACCESS TO INFORMATION BY AN INSPECTOR GENERAL.

(a) REQUIREMENT FOR CONGRESSIONAL NOTIFICATION.—If an individual working for, or on behalf of, an inspector general of an agency, department, or instrumentality of the United States or working for, or on behalf of, the Counsel for Professional Responsibility of the Department of Justice, in fulfillment of the mandate of such inspector general or Counsel is denied access to a specific classified compartment or denied access to a special access program, the head of such agency, department, or instrumentality shall submit to the appropriate committees of Congress a notification of the denial not later than 15 days after the date of the denial.

(b) CONTENT OF NOTIFICATION.—A notification required by subsection (a) shall include—

(1) the nature of the review, inquiry, or investigation in which the individual was engaged;

(2) the title or position of the individual involved;

(3) the name of the compartment or program involved; and

(4) the official who made the decision to deny the access.

(c) APPROPRIATE COMMITTEES OF CONGRESS DEFINED.—In this section, the term ''appropriate committees of Congress'' means the Select Committee on Intelligence of the Senate, the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence of the House of Representatives, and any committee of the Senate or the House of Representatives that has oversight responsibility for the appropriate agency, department, or instrumentality of the United States.

(d) REQUESTS PENDING AFTER 60 DAYS.—If a request for access to a specific classified compartment or to a special access program is not granted or denied within 60 days of the date of the original request for such access, a notification under subsection (a) shall be required.

SA 2170. Mr. REID submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the end of title XXXI, add the following:

SEC. 3126. INCLUSION OF CERTAIN NUCLEAR WEAPONS PROGRAM WORKERS IN THE SPECIAL EXPOSURE COHORT UNDER THE ENERGY EMPLOYEES OCCUPATIONAL ILLNESS COMPENSATION PROGRAM ACT OF 2000.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 3621 of the Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program Act of 2000 (42 U.S.C. 7384*l*) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (9), by adding at the end the following new subparagraph:

''(C) An individual described in paragraph (14)(D).''; and

(2) in paragraph (14), by adding at the end the following new subparagraph:

''(D) The employee was so employed at the Nevada Test Site or other similar sites located in Nevada during the period beginning on January 1, 1950, and ending on December 31, 1993, and contracted an occupational illness, basal cell carcinoma, or chronic lymphocytic leukemia, and, during such employment—

''(i) was present during an atmospheric or underground nuclear test or performed drillbacks, tunnel re-entry, or clean-up work following such a test (without regard to the duration of employment);

''(ii) was present at an event involving the venting of an underground test or during a planned or unplanned radiation release (without regard to the duration of employment);

''(iii) was present during testing or post-test activities related to nuclear rocket or ramjet engine testing at the Nevada Test Site (without regard to the duration of employment);

''(iv) was assigned to work at Area 51 or other classified program areas of the Nevada Test Site (without regard to the duration of employment); or

''(v) was employed at the Nevada Test Site, and was employed in a job activity that—

''(I) was monitored for exposure to ionizing radiation; or

''(II) was comparable to a job that is, was, or should have been monitored for exposure to ionizing radiation at the Nevada Test Site.''.

(b) DEADLINE FOR CLAIMS ADJUDICATION.—Claims for compensation under section 3621(14)(D) of the Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program Act of 2000, as added by subsection (a), shall be adjudicated and a final decision issued—

(1) in the case of claims pending as of the date of the enactment of this Act, not later than 30 days after such date; and

(2) in the case of claims filed after the date of the enactment of this Act, not later than 30 days after the date of such filing.

SA 2171. Mr. FEINGOLD (for himself, Mr. LEAHY, Mr. DODD, Mr. KERRY, Mrs. BOXER, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, Mr. KENNEDY, Mr. HARKIN, Mr. SANDERS, and Mr. WYDEN) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the end of subtitle C of title XV, add the following:

SEC. 1535. SAFE REDEPLOYMENT OF THE TROOPS FROM IRAQ.

(a) TRANSITION OF MISSION.—The President shall promptly transition the mission of United States forces in Iraq to the limited purposes set forth in subsection (d).

(b) COMMENCEMENT OF SAFE, PHASED REDEPLOYMENT FROM IRAQ.—The President shall commence the safe, phased redeployment of United States forces from Iraq that are not essential to the limited purposes set forth in subsection (d). Such redeployment shall begin not later than 120 days after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(c) USE OF FUNDS.—No funds authorized to be appropriated or otherwise made available under any provision of law may be obligated or expended to continue the deployment in Iraq of members of the Armed Forces after March 31, 2008.

(d) EXCEPTION FOR LIMITED PURPOSES.—The prohibition in subsection (c) shall not apply to the obligation or expenditure of funds for the limited purposes as follows:

(1) To conduct targeted operations, limited in duration and scope, against members of al Qaeda and other international terrorist organizations.

(2) To provide security for United States infrastructure and personnel.

(3) To train and equip Iraqi security services.

SA 2172. Mr. CONRAD (for himself, Mr. DORGAN, Ms. LANDRIEU, and Mr. VITTER) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the end of subtitle D of title I, add the following:

SEC. 143. MODIFICATION OF LIMITATIONS ON RETIREMENT OF B–52 BOMBER AIRCRAFT.

(a) MAINTENANCE OF PRIMARY AND BACKUP INVENTORY OF AIRCRAFT.—Subsection (a)(1) of section 131 of the John Warner National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2007 (Public Law 109–364; 120 Stat. 2111) is amended—

(1) in subparagraph (A), by striking ''and'' at the end;

(2) in subparagraph (B), by striking the period at the end and inserting ''; and''; and

(3) by adding at the end the following new subparagraph (C):

''(C) shall maintain in a common configuration a primary aircraft inventory of not less than 63 such aircraft and a backup aircraft inventory of not less than 11 such aircraft.''.

(b) NOTICE OF RETIREMENT.—Subsection (b)(1) of such section is amended by striking ''45 days'' and inserting ''60 days''.

SA 2173. Mr. KOHL (for himself and Mr. WARNER) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the end of title VIII, add the following:

SEC. 876. GREEN PROCUREMENT POLICY.

(a) FINDINGS.—The Senate makes the following findings:

(1) On September 1, 2004, the Department of Defense issued its green procurement policy. The policy affirms a goal of 100 percent compliance with Federal laws and executive orders requiring purchase of environmentally friendly, or green, products and services. The policy also outlines a strategy for meeting those requirements along with metrics for measuring progress.

(2) On September 13, 2006, the Department of Defense hosted a biobased product showcase and educational event which underscores the importance and seriousness with which the Department is implementing its green procurement program.

(3) On January 24, 2007, President Bush signed Executive Order 13423: Strengthening Federal Environmental, Energy, and Transportation Management, which contains the requirement that Federal agencies procure biobased and environmentally preferable products and services.

(4) Although the Department of Defense continues to work to become a leading advocate of green procurement, there is concern that there is not a procurement application or process in place at the Department that supports compliance analysis.

(b) SENSE OF THE SENATE.—It is the sense of the Senate that—

(1) not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Department of Defense should provide to Congress a report on its plan to increase the usage of cleaning products that minimize potential impacts to human health and the environment at all Department of Defense facilities inside and outside the United States, including through the direct purchase of products and the purchase of products by facility maintenance contractors; and

(2) the Department of Defense should establish a system to document and track the use of environmentally preferable products and services.

SA 2174. Mr. LEVIN (for himself and Mr. MCCAIN) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the end of subtitle B of title I, add the following:

SEC. 115. GENERAL FUND ENTERPRISE BUSINESS SYSTEM.

(a) ADDITIONAL AMOUNT.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The amount authorized to be appropriated by section 101(5) for other procurement for the Army is hereby increased by $59,041,000.

(2) AVAILABILITY.—Of the amount authorized to be appropriated by section 101(5) for other procurement for the Army, as increased by paragraph (1), $59,041,000 may be available for the General Fund Enterprise Business System of the Army.

(3) SUPPLEMENT NOT SUPPLANT.—The amount available under paragraph (2) for the purpose specified in that paragraph is in addition to any other amounts available in this Act for that purpose.

(b) OFFSET.—

(1) RDTE, ARMY.—The amount authorized to be appropriated by section 201(1) for research, development, test, and evaluation for the Army is hereby reduced by $29,219,000, with the amount of the reduction to be allocated to amounts available for the General Fund Enterprise Business System.

(2) O&M, ARMY.—The amount authorized to be appropriated by section 301(1) for operation and maintenance for the Army is hereby reduced by $29,822,000, with the amount of the reduction to be allocated to amounts available for the General Fund Enterprise Business System.

SA 2175. Mr. LEVIN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

On page 246, strike lines 4 through 6 and insert the following:

(G) the information officers of the Defense Agencies; and

(H) the Director of Operational Test and Evaluation and the heads of the operational test organizations of the military departments and the Defense Agencies.

On page 247, between lines 7 and 8, insert the following:

(9) The adequacy of operational and development test resources (including infrastructure and personnel), policies, and procedures to ensure appropriate testing of information technology systems both during development and before operational use.

(10) The appropriate policies and procedures for technology assessment, development, and operational testing for purposes of the adoption of commercial technologies into information technology systems.

SA 2176. Mr. DODD submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. ____. GAO REVIEW OF USE OF AUTHORITY UNDER THE DEFENSE PRODUCTION ACT OF 1950.

(a) THOROUGH REVIEW REQUIRED.—The Comptroller General of the United States (in this section referred to as the ''Comptroller'') shall conduct a thorough review of the application of the Defense Production Act of 1950, since the date of enactment of the Defense Production Act Reauthorization of 2003 (Public Law 108–195), in light of amendments made by that Act.

(b) CONSIDERATIONS.—In conducting the review required by this section, the Comptroller shall examine—

(1) existing authorities under the Defense Production Act of 1950;

(2) whether and how such authorities should be statutorily modified to ensure preparedness of the United States and United States industry—

(A) to meet security challenges;

(B) to meet current and future defense requirements;

(C) to meet current and future energy requirements;

(D) to meet current and future domestic emergency and disaster response and recovery requirements;

(E) to reduce the interruption of critical infrastructure operations during a terrorist attack, natural catastrophe, or other similar national emergency; and

(F) to safeguard critical components of the United States industrial base, including American aerospace and shipbuilding industries;

(3) the effectiveness of amendments made by the Defense Production Act Reauthorization of 2003, and the implementation of such amendments;

(4) advantages and limitations of Defense Production Act of 1950-related capabilities, to ensure adaptation of the law to meet the security challenges of the 21st Century;

(5) the economic impact of foreign offset contracts and the efficacy of existing authority in mitigating such impact;

(6) the relative merit of developing rapid and standardized systems for use of the authority provided under the Defense Production Act of 1950, by any Federal agency; and

(7) such other issues as the Comptroller determines relevant.

(c) REPORT TO CONGRESS.—Not later than 120 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Comptroller shall submit a report to

the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs of the Senate on the results of the review conducted under this section, together with any legislative recommendations.

(d) RULES OF CONSTRUCTION ON PROTECTION OF INFORMATION.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law—

(1) the provisions of section 705(d) of the Defense Production Act of 1950 (50 U.S.C. App. 2155(d)) shall not apply to information sought or obtained by the Comptroller for purposes of the review required by this section; and

(2) provisions of law pertaining to the protection of classified information or proprietary information otherwise applicable to information sought or obtained by the Comptroller in carrying out this section shall not be affected by any provision of this section.

SA 2177. Mr. BINGAMAN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the end of subtitle E of title X, add the following:

SEC. 1070. RELIEF OF RICHARD M. BARLOW OF SANTA FE, NEW MEXICO.

(a) FINDINGS.—Congress makes the following findings:

(1) Richard Barlow was a counter-proliferation intelligence officer with expertise in Pakistan nuclear issues.

(2) From 1980–82, Mr. Barlow served as the action officer for Pakistan proliferation matters at the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency.

(3) In 1985, Mr. Barlow joined the Central Intelligence Agency, becoming a recognized issue expert on Pakistan's clandestine nuclear purchasing networks and its weapons programs.

(4) After serving as a Special Agent with the Customs Service, Mr. Barlow then joined the Office of the Secretary of Defense starting in 1989, where he continued to investigate Pakistan's nuclear weapons network headed by A. Q. Khan.

(5) Mr. Barlow was instrumental in the 1987 arrest and later conviction of 2 agents in Pakistan's nuclear weapons development program headed by A. Q. Khan, for which he received an award for exceptional accomplishment from the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency and numerous commendations from senior State Department and law enforcement officials.

(6) In addition, Mr. Barlow received a prestigious commendation from the State Department's Legal Advisor for assistance to President Ronald Reagan and Secretary of State George P. Schultz for triggering the Solarz Amendment relating to termination of military and economic aid to Pakistan for exporting nuclear weapons technology.

(7) In a classified hearing following the arrests of the Pakistani agents, Mr. Barlow, as the Central Intelligence Agency's top expert, testified truthfully to the Subcommittee on Asian Pacific Affairs of the Committee on International Relations of the House of Representatives, then known as the House Foreign Affairs Committee, that the arrested Pakistanis were agents of the Pakistani government, and revealed that Pakistan had continued to regularly violate United States nuclear export laws.

(8) Mr. Barlow's actions revealed that certain Executive Branch officials had been withholding this information from the Congressional committees.

(9) In 1989, Mr. Barlow joined the Office of the Secretary of Defense in the Office of Non-proliferation where he continued to investigate Pakistani proliferation networks.

(10) In April 1989, Mr. Barlow received an outstanding performance review from his Department of Defense supervisors, and in June 1989 he was promoted.

(11) During the spring and early summer of 1989, Mr. Barlow told his supervisors on a number of occasions that he had serious concerns that Executive Branch officials were concealing intelligence about Pakistan's nuclear program from Congress and were obstructing pending criminal investigations into Pakistan's procurement efforts in order to avoid triggering the Pressler and Solarz Amendments and to obtain approval for a proposed $1,400,000,000 sale of F–16 jets to Pakistan.

(12) On August 2, 1989, Mr. Barlow raised concerns about false testimony given by senior officials to the Congress on Pakistan's nuclear capabilities to the Subcommittee on Asian Pacific Affairs of the Committee on International Relations of the House.

(13) On August 4, 1989, several weeks after being promoted, Richard Barlow was handed a notice of pending termination.

(14) On August 8, 1989, Mr. Barlow's security clearances were suspended for reasons that were classified and not revealed to him.

(15) On August 26, 1989, Mr. Barlow, under threat of firing, was offered a series of menial, temporary assignments by Department of Defense personnel and security officials concerned about possible retaliation against him as a Congressional whistleblower by senior officials in the Office of the Secretary of Defense.

(16) Mr. Barlow then underwent a 9-month long security investigation involving numerous allegations levied against him by his superiors in the Office of Secretary of Defense, all of which were found to be false.

(17) In March of 1990, Mr. Barlow then had his security clearance restored and remained in a series of temporary assignments until February 1992, when he then resigned under duress.

(18) At the time of his separation from government service, Mr. Barlow had completed 8 years of government service.

(19) Mr. Barlow's temporary loss of his security clearance and personnel actions against him damaged his reputation and left him unable to find suitable employment inside the Government.

(20) For the next 15 years, Mr. Barlow continued to serve his country as a consultant to the intelligence and law enforcement communities working on complex counter-intelligence and counter-proliferation operations without the benefits he would have had if he had continued as a Federal employee.

(21) In 1998, the Senate approved a private relief resolution, Senate Resolution 253 (105th Congress) to provide compensation for Richard Barlow's losses on ''the nature, extent, and character of the claim for compensation referred to in such bill as a legal or equitable claim against the United States or a gratuity''.

(22) With Senate Resolution 253, the Senate recognized the importance of protecting Federal employees who inform Congress of Executive Branch distortions of the truth and other wrongdoing.

(23) On March 6, 2000, the Government filed a protective order under the state secrets privilege for documents requested under discovery by Mr. Barlow relating to the Pakistan nuclear program.

(24) The documents denied under the state secret privilege were documents that Mr. Barlow had official access to prior to the loss of clearance.

(25) The documents denied under the state secrets privilege were subpoenaed by Mr. Barlow to substantiate the allegations he originally made regarding his claim of false testimony of Government officials to Congress on the Pakistan nuclear weapons program and the actions taken against him.

(26) The evidence withheld from the Court as a result of the state secrets privilege included significant, sworn statements from a number of senior intelligence, Department of State, and Department of Defense officials corroborating Mr. Barlow's charges of Executive Branch wrongdoing.

(27) As a result of the use of the state secrets privilege, Mr. Barlow and the United States Court of Federal Claims did not have access to evidence and information necessary to evaluate the key information relating to the merits of Mr. Barlow's case and accurately report its findings to the Senate.

(28) Since Mr. Barlow's separation from government service in 1992, five Senate and five House committees have intervened in support of Mr. Barlow's case on a bipartisan basis, and investigations by the Central Intelligence Agency, State Department Inspectors General, and the Government Accountability Office have corroborated Mr. Barlow's findings or found that personnel actions were taken against him in reprisal.

(29) Richard Barlow is recognized for his patriotism and service to his country.

(b) COMPENSATION OF CERTAIN LOSSES.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of the Treasury shall pay, out of any money in the Treasury not otherwise appropriated, to Richard M. Barlow of Santa Fe, New Mexico, the sum of $1,800,000 for compensation for losses incurred by Richard M. Barlow relating to and a direct consequence of—

(A) personnel actions taken by the Department of Defense affecting Richard Barlow's employment at the Department (including Richard Barlow's top secret security clearance) during the period beginning on August 4, 1989, and ending on February 27, 1992; and

(B) Richard Barlow's separation from service with the Department of Defense on February 27, 1992.

(2) NO INFERENCE OF LIABILITY.—Nothing in this section shall be construed as an inference of liability on the part of the United States.

(3) NO AGENTS AND ATTORNEYS FEES.—None of the payment authorized by this section may be paid to or received by any agent or attorney for any services rendered in connection with obtaining such payment. Any person who violates this subsection shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and shall be subject to a fine in the amount provided in title 18, United States Code.

(4) NON-TAXABILITY OF PAYMENT.—The payment authorized by this section is in partial reimbursement for losses incurred by Richard Barlow as a result of the personnel actions taken by the Department of Defense and is not subject to Federal, State, or local income taxes.

SA 2178. Mr. KYL (for himself, Mr. VITTER, Mr. INHOFE, Mr. LIEBERMAN, and Mr. LOTT) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal

year, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the end of subtitle C of title I, add the following:

SEC. 132. ENHANCEMENT OF FLEET MISSILE DEFENSE CAPABILITIES.

(a) ADDITIONAL AMOUNT FOR ENHANCEMENT OF ATLANTIC FLEET MISSILE DEFENSE CAPABILITIES.—

(1) ADDITIONAL AMOUNT.—The amount authorized to be appropriated by section 102(a)(4) for other procurement for the Navy is hereby increased by $62,000,000.

(2) AVAILABILITY.—Of the amount authorized to be appropriated by section 102(a)(4) for other procurement for the Navy, as increased by paragraph (1), the amount available for Program element 0204228N for Aegis Support Equipment (Budget Line Item 524600) is hereby increased by $51,500,000 and the amount available for Program Element 0204228N for Aegis Support Equipment (Budget Line Item 524605) is hereby increased by $10,500,000, with such amounts to be available—

(A) for the procurement of equipment to outfit United States Atlantic Fleet ships with Aegis Ballistic Missile Defense Radar and Weapons System modifications; and

(B) to expand and enhance Navy installation teams to support installation of the modifications described in paragraph (1) into United States Atlantic Fleet vessels commencing in 2010.

(b) ADDITIONAL AMOUNT FOR AEGIS BALLISTIC MISSILE DEFENSE SHIPS.—

(1) ADDITIONAL AMOUNT.—The amount authorized to be appropriated by section 201(4) for research, development, test, and evaluation, Defense-wide may be increased by $25,000,000.

(2) AVAILABILITY.—Of the amount authorized to be appropriated by section 201(4) for research, development, test, and evaluation, Defense-wide, as increased by paragraph (1), $25,000,000 may be available for Ballistic Missile Defense Aegis (Program Element 0603892C) for the enhancement of the capacity of Aegis Ballistic Missile Defense ships to intercept ballistic missiles in the ascent phase.

(c) OFFSET.—The amount authorized to be appropriated by section 1505(3) for research, development, test, and evaluation, Air Force, is hereby reduced by $87,000,000, with the amount of the reduction to be allocated to funds available for MILSATCOM Terminals (Program Element 0303601F).

SA 2179. Mr. DOMENICI (for himself and Mr. BINGAMAN) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the end of subtitle A of title II, add the following:

SEC. 203. AMOUNT FOR HIGH SPEED TEST TRACK, HOLLOMAN AIR FORCE BASE, NEW MEXICO.

(a) INCREASE IN AMOUNT FOR AIR FORCE RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT, TEST, AND EVALUATION.—The amount authorized to be appropriated by section 201(3) for the Air Force for research, development, test, and evaluation is hereby increased by $7,000,000.

(b) AVAILABILITY FOR HIGH SPEED TEST TRACK.—Of the amount authorized to be appropriated by section 201(3) for the Air Force for research, development, test, and evaluation, as increased by subsection (a), $7,000,000 may be available for the High Speed Test Track, Holloman Air Force Base, New Mexico.

(c) OFFSET.—The amount authorized to be appropriated by section 301(4) for the Air Force for operation and maintenance is hereby reduced by $7,000,000.

SA 2180. Mr. DOMENICI (for himself and Mr. BINGAMAN) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the end of subtitle A of title II, add the following:

SEC. 203. AMOUNT FOR JOINT DIRECTED ENERGY TEST SITE, WHITE SANDS MISSILE RANGE, NEW MEXICO.

(a) INCREASE IN AMOUNT FOR ARMY RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT, TEST, AND EVALUATION.—The amount authorized to be appropriated by section 201(1) for the Army for research, development, test, and evaluation is hereby increased by $8,000,000.

(b) AVAILABILITY FOR JOINT DIRECTED ENERGY TEST SITE.—Of the amount authorized to be appropriated by section 201(1) for the Army for research, development, test, and evaluation, as increased by subsection (a), $8,000,000 may be available for the Joint Directed Energy Test Site, White Sands Missile Range, New Mexico.

(c) OFFSET.—The amount authorized to be appropriated by section 301(1) for the Army for operation and maintenance is hereby reduced by $8,000,000.

SA 2181. Mr. LOTT submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the end of subtitle B of title II, add the following:

SEC. 214. 10,000-POUND BALLISTIC AERIAL DELIVERY AND SOFT-LANDING SYSTEM.

(a) ADDITIONAL AMOUNT FOR RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT, TEST AND EVALUATION, ARMY.—The amount authorized to be appropriated by section 201(1) for research, development, test, and evaluation for the Army is hereby increased by $4,000,000.

(b) AVAILABILITY.—Of the amount authorized to be appropriated by section 201(1) for research, development, test, and evaluation for Army, as increased by subsection (a), $4,000,000 may be available for Advanced Warfighter Technologies (PE #0603001A) for the 10,000-pound Ballistic Aerial Delivery and Soft-Landing System.

(c) OFFSET.—The amount authorized to be appropriated by section 201(4) for research, development, test, and evaluation for Defense-wide activities is hereby reduced by $4,000,000.

SA 2182. Mr. LOTT submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the end of subtitle C of title XIV, add the following:

SEC. 1422. ADMINISTRATION AND OVERSIGHT OF THE ARMED FORCES RETIREMENT HOME.

(a) INDEPENDENCE AND PURPOSE OF RETIREMENT HOME.—Section 1511 of the Armed Forces Retirement Home Act of 1991 (24 U.S.C. 411) is amended—

(1) in subsection (a), by adding at the end the following: ''However, the Retirement Home shall be treated as a military facility of the Department of Defense, and may not be privatized. The administration of the Retirement Home (including administration for the provision of health care and medical care for residents) shall remain under the direct authority, control, and administration of the Secretary of Defense.''; and

(2) by striking subsection (g) and inserting the following new subsection (g):

''(g) ACCREDITATION.—The Chief Executive Officer shall secure and maintain accreditation by a nationally recognized civilian accrediting organization for each aspect of each facility of the Retirement Home, including medical and dental care, pharmacy, independent living, and assisted living and nursing care.''.

(b) SPECTRUM OF CARE.—Section 1513(b) of the Armed Forces Retirement Home Act of 1991 (24 U.S.C. 413(b)) is amended by inserting after the first sentence the following new sentence: ''The services provided residents of the Retirement Home shall include nonacute medical and dental services, pharmaceutical services, and transportation of residents, at no cost to residents, to acute medical and dental services and after-hours routine medical care''.

(c) ADMINISTRATION THROUGH CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Section 1515 of the Armed Forces Retirement Home Act of 1991 (24 U.S.C. 415) is amended—

(A) by striking ''Chief Operating Officer'' each place it appears and inserting ''Chief Executive Officer''; and

(B) in subsection (e)(1), by striking ''Chief Operating Officer's'' and inserting ''Chief Executive Officer's''.

(2) HEADING AMENDMENT.—The heading of such section is amended to read as follows:

''SEC. 1515. CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER.''.

(3) OTHER CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—The Armed Forces Retirement Home Act of 1991 is further amended by striking ''Chief Operating Officer'' each place it appears (other than section 1531 (24 U.S.C. 431)) and inserting ''Chief Executive Officer''.

(d) MODIFICATION OF AUTHORITIES APPLICABLE TO CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER.—

(1) TERM OF OFFICE; ELIGIBILITY FOR REAPPOINTMENT.—Paragraph (2) of subsection (a) of section 1515 of such Act is amended to read as follows:

''(2) The Chief Executive Officer shall serve a term of four years, but is removable from office during such term at the pleasure of the Secretary. An individual may be reappointed as Chief Executive Officer for a single additional term of four years.''.

(2) EVALUATION OF PERFORMANCE.—Subsection (a)(3) of such section is amended by adding at the end the following new sentence: ''In evaluating the performance of the Chief Executive Officer, the Secretary shall take into account the views of the Local

Board for each facility of the Retirement Home and of the residents of each facility of the Retirement Home.''.

(3) QUALIFICATIONS.—Subsection (b) of such section is amended to read as follows:

''(b) QUALIFICATIONS.—To qualify for appointment as the Chief Executive Officer, a person shall have—

''(1) not less than 10 years of civilian or military experience as a medical doctor, nurse, nurse practitioner, or other public health care professional;

''(2) experience managing a medical care facility or continuing care facility, including experience—

''(A) managing a military installation, military medical treatment facility or veterans medical care facility, public health care facility, or retirement home; or

''(B) providing long-term medical care to the elderly; and

''(3) proven senior leadership and management skills as an administrator of a military installation, residential or medical facility, or public health care facility.''.

(4) RESPONSIBILITIES.—Subsection (c) of such section is amended—

(A) in paragraph (1)—

(i) by striking '', operation, and management'' and inserting ''and financial management''; and

(ii) by striking ''to the Secretary'' and inserting ''directly to the Secretary (or the designee of the Secretary)'';

(B) in paragraph (2)—

(i) by striking ''supervise the operation and administration'' and inserting ''advise the Secretary on the long-term financial and administrative management''; and

(ii) by striking '', including the Local Boards of those facilities''; and

(C) in paragraph (3)(C), by inserting before the period at the end the following ''and submit to the Secretary and the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness on a quarterly basis reports on such examinations and audits''.

(5) COMPENSATION.—Subsection (d)(2) of such section is amended by striking the second sentence and inserting the following new sentence: ''In determining the amount of the bonus each year, the Secretary shall take into account the views of the Local Board for each facility of the Retirement Home, and the resident advisory committee or council of each facility, regarding the performance of the Chief Executive Officer.''.

(e) CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER.—The Armed Forces Retirement Home Act of 1991 is further amended by inserting after section 1515 the following new section:

''SEC. 1515A. CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER.

''(a) APPOINTMENT.—(1) The Secretary of Defense shall appoint the Chief Medical Officer of the Retirement Home. The Secretary of Defense shall make the appointment in consultation with the Secretary of Homeland Security.

''(2) The Chief Medical Officer shall serve a term of two years, but is removable from office during such term at the pleasure of the Secretary.

''(3) The Secretary (or the designee of the Secretary) shall evaluate the performance of the Chief Medical Officer not less frequently than once each year. The Secretary shall carry out such evaluation in consultation with the Chief Executive Officer and the Local Board for each facility of the Retirement Home.

''(4) An officer appointed as Chief Medical Officer of the Retirement Home shall serve as Chief Medical Officer without vacating any other military duties and responsibilities assigned to that officer whether at the time of appointment or afterward.

''(b) QUALIFICATIONS.—(1) To qualify for appointment as the Chief Medical Officer, a person shall be a member of the Medical, Dental, Nurse, or Medical Services Corps of the Armed Forces, including the Health and Safety Directorate of the Coast Guard, serving on active duty in the grade of brigadier general, or in the case of the Navy or the Coast Guard rear admiral (lower half), or higher.

''(2) In making appointments of the Chief Medical Officer, the Secretary of Defense shall, to the extent practicable, provide for the rotation of the appointments among the various Armed Forces and the Health and Safety Directorate of the Coast Guard.

''(c) RESPONSIBILITIES.—(1) The Chief Medical Officer shall be responsible to the Secretary, the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, and the Chief Executive Officer for the direction and oversight of the provision of medical, mental health, and dental care at each facility of the Retirement Home.

''(2) The Chief Medical Officer shall advise the Secretary, the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, the Chief Executive Officer, and the Local Board for each facility of the Retirement Home on all medical and medical administrative matters of the Retirement Home.

''(d) DUTIES.—In carrying out the responsibilities set forth in subsection (c), the Chief Medical Officer shall perform the following duties:

''(1) Ensure the timely availability to residents of the Retirement Home, at locations other than the Retirement Home, of such acute medical, mental health, and dental care as such resident may require that is not available at the applicable facility of the Retirement Home.

''(2) Ensure compliance by the facilities of the Retirement Home with accreditation standards, applicable health care standards of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and any other applicable health card standards and requirements (including requirements identified in applicable reports of the Inspectors General for the Retirement Home and the Inspector General of the Department of Defense).

''(3) Periodically visit and inspect the medical facilities and medical operations of each facility of the Retirement Home.

''(4) Periodically examine and audit the medical records and administration of the Retirement Home.

''(5) Consult with the Local Board for each facility of the Retirement Home not less frequently than once each year.

''(e) ADVISORY BODIES.—In carrying out the responsibilities set forth in subsection (c) and the duties set forth in subsection (d), the Chief Medical Officer may establish and seek the advice of such advisory bodies as the Chief Medical Officer considers appropriate.''.

(f) LOCAL BOARDS OF TRUSTEES.—

(1) DUTIES.—Subsection (b) of section 1516 of the Armed Forces Retirement Home Act of 1991 (24 U.S.C. 416) is amended to read as follows:

''(b) DUTIES.—(1) The Local Board for a facility shall serve in an advisory capacity to the Director of the facility and to the Chief Executive Officer.

''(2) The Local Board for a facility shall provide to the Chief Executive Officer and the Director of the facility such guidance and recommendations on the administration of the facility as the Local Board considers appropriate.

''(3) The Local Board for a facility shall provide to the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness not less often than annually an assessment of all aspects of the facility, including the quality of care at the facility.

''(4) Not less frequently than one each year, the Local Board for a facility shall submit to Congress a report that includes an assessment of all aspects of the facility, including the quality of care at the facility.''.

(2) COMPOSITION.—Subparagraph (K) of subsection (c) of such section is amended to read as follows:

''(K) One senior representative of one of the chief personnel officers of the Armed Forces, who shall be a member of the Armed Forces serving on active duty in the grade of brigadier general, or in the case of the Navy or Coast Guard, rear admiral (lower half).''.

(g) DIRECTORS, DEPUTY DIRECTORS, ASSOCIATE DIRECTORS, AND STAFF OF FACILITIES.—

(1) DIRECTORS.—

(A) QUALIFICATIONS FOR APPOINTMENT, TERM, AND SUPERVISION.—Subsection (b) of section 1517 of the Armed Forces Retirement Home Act of 1991 (24 U.S.C. 417) is amended to read as follows:

''(b) DIRECTOR.—(1) The Director of a facility shall—

''(A) be a member of the Armed Forces serving on active duty in the grade of colonel or, in the case of the Navy, captain;

''(B) either—

''(i) have proven leadership and management skills, including at least one tour of duty as a commanding officer or executive officer of a military installation or similar facility; or

''(ii) have served as a director, deputy director, or commanding officer of a military hospital or military medical or dental treatment facility; and

''(C) possess certification as a retirement facilities director from an appropriate civilian certifying organization, or obtain such certification within the time otherwise applicable to civilian achievement of such certification unless the requirement for such certification is waived by the Secretary of Defense.

''(2) The Director of a facility shall serve at the pleasure of the Secretary.

''(3) The Director of a facility shall be under the direction of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness. The Director of a facility shall also keep the Chief Executive Officer and the Chief Medical Officer apprised of matters relating to the facility.

''(4) The Secretary or the Under Secretary shall evaluate the performance of the Director of a facility not less frequently than once each year, in consultation with the Local Board for the facility and the residents of the facility.''.

(B) ADDITIONAL DUTIES.—Subsection (c) of such section is amended by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

''(3) The Director of a facility shall work with the Chief Executive Officer and the Chief Medical Officer to ensure that sufficient resources are available to manage the facility properly.''.

(2) DEPUTY DIRECTORS.—Subsection (d) of such section is amended to read as follows:

''(d) DEPUTY DIRECTOR.—(1) The Deputy Director of a facility shall—

''(A) either—

''(i) be a civilian with not less than 5 years of experience as a continuing care retirement community professional; or

''(ii) be a member of the Armed Forces serving on active duty in a grade of or below lieutenant colonel or, in the case of the Navy, commander; and

''(B) have proven appropriate leadership and management skills.

''(2) The Deputy Director of a facility shall serve at the pleasure of the Secretary of Defense.

''(3) The Deputy Director of a facility shall be under the direction of the Director of the facility.''.

(3) ASSOCIATE DIRECTORS.—

(A) QUALIFICATIONS FOR APPOINTMENT AND SUPERVISION.—Subsection (f) of such section is amended—

(i) in paragraph (1)—

(I) in subparagraph (A), by striking ''and'' at the end;

(II) by redesignating subparagraph (B) as subparagraph (C); and

(III) by inserting after subparagraph (A) the following new subparagraph (B):

''(B) have served as Command Master Chief or Command Senior Enlisted Advisor at a major military command; and''; and

(ii) by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

''(3) The Associate Director of a facility shall be under the direction of the Director and Deputy Director of the facility.''.

(B) ADDITIONAL DUTIES.—Subsection (g) of such section is amended to read as follows:

''(g) DUTIES OF ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR.—The Associate Director of a facility shall—

''(1) serve as ombudsman for the residents of the facility;

''(2) report to the Director of the facility on any issues the Associate Director determines to be important for ensuring proper medical care for the residents of the facility;

''(3) advise the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness and the Local Board for the facility on matters relating to the care of the residents of the facility; and

''(4) perform such other duties as the Director of the facility may specify.''.

(h) INSPECTION OF RETIREMENT HOME.—Section 1518 of such Act (24 U.S.C. 418) is amended to read as follows:

''SEC. 1518. INSPECTION OF RETIREMENT HOME.

''(a) INSPECTORS GENERAL FOR THE RETIREMENT HOME.—(1) The Inspectors General of the military departments shall have the duty to inspect the Retirement Home. The duty to inspect shall alternate among the Inspector General of the Army, the Naval Inspector General, and the Inspector General of the Air Force on such schedule as the Secretary of Defense shall direct.

''(2) On matters relating to the inspection of the Retirement Home the Inspectors General for the Retirement Home under paragraph (1) shall report directly to the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness.

''(3) The Inspectors General for the Retirement Home under paragraph (1) shall advise the Inspector General of the Department of Defense and the Director of each facility of the Retirement Home on matters relating to waste, fraud, abuse, and mismanagement of the Retirement Home.

''(b) INSPECTIONS BY INSPECTOR GENERAL.—(1) Every two years, the current Inspector General for the Retirement Home under subsection (a) shall perform a comprehensive inspection of all aspects of each facility of the Retirement Home, including independent living, assisted living, medical and dental care, pharmacy, financial and contracting records, and any aspect of either facility on which the Local Board for the facility or the resident advisory committee or council of the facility recommends inspection.

''(2) The Inspector General shall be assisted in inspections under this subsection by the medical inspector general of a military department designated for purposes of this subsection by the Secretary of Defense. In making such designations, the Secretary shall designate such medical inspectors general on a rotating basis from among the various military departments.

''(3) In conducting the inspection of a facility of the Retirement Home under this subsection, the Inspector General shall solicit concerns, observations, and recommendations from the Local Board for the facility, the resident advisory committee or council of the facility, and the residents of the facility. Any concerns, observations, and recommendations solicited from residents shall be solicited on a not-for-attribution basis.

''(4) The Chief Executive Officer and the Director of each facility of the Retirement Home shall make all staff, other personnel, and records of each facility available to the Inspector General in a timely manner for purposes of inspections under this subsection.

''(c) REPORTS ON INSPECTIONS BY INSPECTOR GENERAL.—(1) Not later than 45 days after completing an inspection of a facility of the Retirement Home under subsection (b), the current Inspector General for the Retirement Home under subsection (a) shall submit to the Secretary of Defense, the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, the Chief Executive Officer, the Director of the facility, and the Local Board for the facility, and to Congress, a report describing the results of the inspection and containing such recommendations as the Inspector General considers appropriate in light of the inspection.

''(2) Not later than 45 days after receiving a report of the Inspector General under paragraph (1), the Director of the facility concerned shall submit the Secretary of Defense, the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, the Chief Executive Officer, and the Local Board for the facility, and to Congress, a plan to address the recommendations and other matters set forth in the report.

''(d) ADDITIONAL INSPECTIONS.—(1) Every two years, in a year in which the Inspector General does not perform an inspection under subsection (b), the Chief Executive Officer shall request the inspection of each facility of the Retirement Home by the Joint Commission with respect to matters of facilities that are within the purview of the Joint Commission.

''(2) In the event an inspection under paragraph (1) does not address all matters at the facilities of the Retirement Home, the Chief Executive Officer shall request the inspection of the facilities by one or more appropriate civilian accrediting organizations for any matters at such facilities that are not addressed by the inspection under paragraph (1), including independent living, assisted living, and pharmacy (if applicable).

''(3) The Chief Executive Officer and the Director of a facility being inspected under this subsection shall make all staff, other personnel, and records of the facility available to the Joint Commission or other civilian accrediting organization in a timely manner for purposes of inspections under this subsection.

''(e) REPORTS ON ADDITIONAL INSPECTIONS.—(1) Not later than 45 days after receiving a report of an inspection from the Joint Commission or other civilian accrediting organization under subsection (d), the Director of the facility concerned shall submit to the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, the Chief Executive Officer, and the Local Board for the facility a report containing—

''(A) the results of the inspection; and

''(B) a plan to address any recommendations and other matters set forth in the report.

''(2) Not later than 45 days after receiving a report and plan under paragraph (1), the Secretary of Defense shall submit the report and plan to Congress.''.

(i) ARMED FORCES RETIREMENT HOME TRUST FUND.—Section 1519 of the Armed Forces Retirement Home Act of 1991 (24 U.S.C. 419) is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

''(d) REPORTING REQUIREMENTS.—The Chief Financial Officer of the Armed Forces Retirement Home shall comply with the reporting requirements of subchapter II of chapter 35 of title 31, United States Code.''.

SA 2183. Mr. WYDEN (for himself, Mr. BOND, and Mr. ROCKEFELLER) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; as follows:

At the end, add the following:

TITLE XXXIII—OTHER MATTERS

SEC. 3301. AVAILABILITY OF THE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE REPORT ON CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY ACCOUNTABILITY REGARDING THE TERRORIST ATTACKS OF SEPTEMBER 11, 2001.

(a) PUBLIC AVAILABILITY.—Not later than 30 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency shall prepare and make available to the public a version of the Executive Summary of the report entitled the ''Office of Inspector General Report on Central Intelligence Agency Accountability Regarding Findings and Conclusions of the Joint Inquiry into Intelligence Community Activities Before and After the Terrorist Attacks of September 11, 2001'' issued in June 2005 that is declassified to the maximum extent possible, consistent with national security.

(b) REPORT TO CONGRESS.—The Director of the Central Intelligence Agency shall submit to Congress a classified annex to the redacted Executive Summary made available under subsection (a) that explains the reason that any redacted material in the Executive Summary was withheld from the public.

SA 2184. Mr. SUNUNU proposed an amendment to amendment SA 2135 submitted by Mr. DORGAN (for himself, Mr. CONRAD, and Mr. SALAZAR) to the amendment SA 2011 proposed by Mr. NELSON of Nebraska (for Mr. LEVIN) to the bill H.R. 1585, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; as follows:

Strike page 2, line 2 and insert in lieu thereof: ''for the capture or death or information leading to the capture or death of''.

SA 2185. Mr. AKAKA submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the end of subtitle C of title VIII, add the following:

SEC. 847. CONTRACT GOALS FOR NATIVE HAWAIIAN-SERVING INSTITUTIONS AND ALASKA NATIVE-SERVING INSTITUTIONS.

Section 2323 of title 10, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in subsection (a)—

(A) in paragraph (1)—

(i) in subparagraph (C), by striking ''and'' at the end;

(ii) in subparagraph (D), by striking the period at the end and inserting ''; and''; and

(iii) by adding at the end the following new subparagraph:

''(E) Native Hawaiian-serving institutions and Alaska Native-serving institutions (as defined in section 317 of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1059d)).''; and

(B) in paragraph (2), by inserting after ''Hispanic-serving institutions,'' the following: ''Native Hawaiian-serving institutions and Alaska Native-serving institutions,''; and

(2) in subsection (c)—

(A) in paragraph (1), by inserting after ''Hispanic-serving institutions,'' the following: ''Native Hawaiian-serving institutions and Alaska Native-serving institutions,''; and

(B) in paragraph (3), by inserting after ''Hispanic-serving institutions,'' the following: ''to Native Hawaiian-serving institutions and Alaska Native-serving institutions,''.

SA 2186. Mr. SANDERS submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

On page 106, strike line 13 and all that follows through page 114, line 4 and insert the following:

Subtitle G—Military Family Readiness and Servicemember Reintegration

SEC. 581. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE MILITARY FAMILY READINESS AND SERVICEMEMBER REINTEGRATION COUNCIL.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter I of chapter 88 of title 10, United States Code, is amended by inserting after section 1781 the following new section:

''SEC. 1781a. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE MILITARY FAMILY READINESS AND SERVICEMEMBER REINTEGRATION COUNCIL.

''(a) IN GENERAL.—There is in the Department of Defense the Department of Defense Military Family Readiness and Servicemember Reintegration Council (hereafter in this section referred to as the 'Council').

''(b) MEMBERS.—(1) The members of the Council shall be the following:

''(A) The Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, who shall serve as chair of the Council.

''(B) One representative of each of the Army, the Navy, the Marine Corps, and the Air Force, who shall be appointed by Secretary of Defense.

''(C) The Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

''(D) The Chief of the National Guard Bureau.

''(E) Three individuals appointed by the Secretary of Defense from among representatives of military family organizations (including military family organizations of families of members of the regular components and of families of members of the reserve components), of whom not less than two shall be members of the family of an enlisted member of the armed forces.

''(2) The term on the Council of the members appointed under paragraph (1)(E) shall be three years.

''(c) MEETINGS.—The Council shall meet not less often than twice each year. Not more than one meeting of the Council each year shall be in the National Capital Region.

''(d) DUTIES.—The duties of the Council shall include the following:

''(1) To review and make recommendations to the Secretary of Defense on the policy and plans required under section 1781b of this title.

''(2) To monitor requirements for the support of military family readiness and the support of servicemember reintegration by the Department of Defense.

''(3) To evaluate and assess the effectiveness of the military family readiness and servicemember reintegration programs and activities of the Department of Defense.

''(4) To evaluate and coordinate the policies of the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs to leverage and coordinate the resources of each department in providing military family readiness and servicemember reintegration programs and activities.

''(e) ANNUAL REPORTS.—(1) Not later than February 1 each year, the Council shall submit to the Secretary of Defense and the congressional defense committees a report on military family readiness and servicemember reintegration.

''(2) Each report under this subsection shall include the following:

''(A) An assessment of the adequacy and effectiveness of the military family readiness and servicemember reintegration programs and activities of the Department of Defense during the preceding fiscal year in meeting the needs and requirements of military families.

''(B) Recommendations on actions to be taken to improve the capability of the military family readiness and servicemember reintegration programs and activities of the Department of Defense to meet the needs and requirements of reintegrating members of the Armed Forces and military families, including actions relating to the allocation of funding and other resources to and among such programs and activities.

''(C) The effectiveness of the coordination of the military family readiness and servicemember reintegration programs and activities of the Department of Defense with the activities and programs of the Department of Veterans Affairs.''.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of subchapter I of chapter 88 of such title is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 1781 the following new item:

''Sec. 1781a. Department of Defense Military Family Readiness and Servicemember Reintegration Council.''.

SEC. 582. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE POLICY AND PLANS FOR MILITARY FAMILY READINESS AND SERVICEMEMBER REINTEGRATION PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES.

(a) POLICY AND PLANS REQUIRED.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter I of chapter 88 of title 10, United States Code, as amended by section 581 of this Act, is further amended by inserting after section 1781a the following new section:

''SEC. 1781b. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE POLICY AND PLANS FOR MILITARY FAMILY READINESS AND SERVICEMEMBER REINTEGRATION PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES.

''(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Defense shall develop a policy and plans for the Department of Defense for the support of military family readiness and servicemember reintegration programs and activities.

''(b) PURPOSES.—The purposes of the policy and plans required under subsection (a) are as follows:

''(1) To ensure that the military family readiness programs and servicemember reintegration programs and activities of the Department of Defense are comprehensive, effective, and properly supported.

''(2) To ensure that such programs are coordinated and developed in consultation with the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

''(3) To ensure that support is continuously available to military families in peacetime and in war, as well as during periods of force structure change and relocation of military units.

''(4) To ensure that the military family readiness and servicemember reintegration programs and activities of the Department of Defense are available to all military families, including military families of members of the regular components and military families of members of the reserve components.

''(5) To ensure that the goal of military family readiness and servicemember reintegration is an explicit element of applicable Department of Defense plans, programs, and budgeting activities, and that achievement of military family readiness and servicemember reintegration is expressed through Department-wide goals that are identifiable and measurable.

''(6) To ensure that the military family readiness and servicemember reintegration programs and activities of the Department of Defense undergo continuous evaluation in order to ensure that resources are allocated and expended for such programs and activities in the most effective possible manner throughout the Department.

''(c) ELEMENTS OF POLICY.—The policy required under subsection (a) shall include the following elements:

''(1) A definition for treating a program or activity of the Department of Defense as a military family readiness and servicemember reintegration program or activity.

''(2) Department of Defense-wide goals for military family support and servicemember reintegration, both for military families of members of the regular components and military families of members of the reserve components.

''(3) Requirements for joint programs and activities for military family support and servicemember reintegration.

''(4) Policies on access to military family support and servicemember reintegration programs and activities based on military family populations served and geographical location.

''(5) Policies that recognize the need for follow-up services for reintegrating members of the Armed Forces and their families for extended periods following deployments, including between deployments.

''(6) Requirements for the provision of services to address the unique needs of members of the armed forces and their family members with respect to family readiness and servicemember reintegration, including the following:

''(A) Marriage counseling.

''(B) Services for children.

''(C) Suicide prevention.

''(D) Substance abuse awareness and treatment.

''(E) Mental health awareness and treatment.

''(F) Financial counseling.

''(G) Domestic violence awareness and prevention.

''(H) Employment assistance.

''(I) Development of strategies for living with a member of the armed forces who has post traumatic stress disorder or traumatic brain injury.

''(J) Such other services that may be appropriate to address the unique needs of members of the armed forces and their families who live in rural or remote areas with respect to family readiness and servicemember reintegration.

''(7) Metrics to measure the performance and effectiveness of the military family readiness programs and activities of the Department of Defense.

''(8) Policies on coordination with the Secretary of Veterans Affairs and the Veterans Integrated Service Networks (VISN), the Chief of the National Guard Bureau, and the Adjutant Generals of the States and territories of the United States.

''(9) Policies on coordination of family readiness and servicemember reintegration programs and activities with State and local public and private entities to leverage services provided by the Department of Defense, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and other entities that provide family readiness or servicemember reintegration programs.

''(d) ELEMENTS OF PLANS.—(1) Each plan required under subsection (a) shall include the elements specified in paragraph (2) for the five-fiscal year period beginning with the fiscal year in which such plan is submitted under paragraph (3).

''(2) The elements in each plan required under subsection (a) shall include, for the period covered by such plan, the following:

''(A) An ongoing identification and assessment of the effectiveness of the military family readiness and servicemember reintegration programs and activities of the Department of Defense in meeting goals for such programs and activities, which assessment shall evaluate such programs and activities separately for each military department and for each regular component and each reserve component.

''(B) A description of the resources required to support the military family readiness and servicemember reintegration programs and activities of the Department of Defense, including the military personnel, civilian personnel, and volunteer personnel so required.

''(C) An ongoing identification in gaps in the military family readiness and servicemember reintegration programs and activities of the Department of Defense, and an ongoing identification of the resources required to address such gaps.

''(D) An evaluation of the policies developed in accordance with subsection (c)(5).

''(E) An assessment of the effectiveness of and recommendations to improve the coordination of the military family readiness and servicemember reintegration programs and activities of the Department of Defense with the services and programs of the Department of Veterans Affairs, as well as those of State and local governments.

''(F) Mechanisms to apply the metrics developed under subsection (c)(6).

''(G) A summary, by fiscal year, of the allocation of funds (including appropriated funds and nonappropriated funds) for major categories of military family readiness and servicemember reintegration programs and activities of the Department of Defense, set forth for each of the military departments and for the Office of the Secretary of Defense.

''(3) Not later than March 1, 2008, and each year thereafter, the Secretary of Defense shall submit to the congressional defense committees a report on the plans required under subsection (a) for the 5-fiscal year period beginning with the fiscal year beginning in the year in which such report is submitted. Each report shall include the plans covered by such report and an assessment of the discharge by the Department of Defense of the previous plans submitted under this subsection.''.

(2) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of subchapter I of chapter 88 of such title, as so amended, is further amended by inserting after the item relating to section 1781a the following new item:

''Sec. 1781b. Department of Defense policy and plans for military family readiness and servicemember reintegration programs and activities.''.

(3) REPORT ON POLICY.—The Secretary of Defense shall submit to the congressional defense committees a report setting forth the policy developed under section 1781b of title 10, United States Code (as added by this subsection), not later than February 1, 2009.

(b) PILOT PROGRAM.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Defense shall carry out a pilot program to assess the feasibility and advisability of providing grants to eligible entities to create comprehensive soldier and family preparedness, reintegration, and outreach programs for members of the Armed Forces and their families to further the purposes described in section 1781b(b) of title 10, United States Code, as added by subsection (a).

(2) GRANTS.—The Secretary of Defense shall carry out the pilot program through the award of grants to eligible entities for the provision of assistance to members of the Armed Forces and their families as described in paragraph (1).

(3) ELIGIBLE ENTITIES.—For purposes of this subsection, an eligible entity is any of the following:

(A) An Adjutant General of a State or territory of the United States.

(B) A Federal Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) office.

(C) A State veterans affairs agency.

(D) A family support group for a regular component of the Armed Forces or for a reserve component of the Armed Forces, if such organization partners with an entity described in subparagraph (A) through (C).

(E) An organization recognized by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs for the representation of veterans under section 5902 of title 38, United States Code, if such organization partners with an entity described in subparagraph (A) through (C).

(F) A State or local nonprofit organization, if such organization partners with an entity described in subparagraph (A) through (C).

(4) USE OF GRANT FUNDS.—Recipients of grants under the pilot program shall develop programs for the provision of assistance and services to members of the Armed Forces and their family members that meet the purposes of section 1781b(b) of title 10, United States Code, as added by subsection (a), which may include the following:

(A) Marriage counseling.

(B) Services for children.

(C) Suicide prevention.

(D) Substance abuse awareness and treatment.

(E) Mental health awareness and treatment.

(F) Financial counseling.

(G) Domestic violence awareness and prevention.

(H) Employment assistance.

(I) Development of strategies for living with a servicemember with post traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injury.

(J) Such other services that may be appropriate to address the unique needs of members of the Armed Forces and their families who live in rural or remote areas with respect to family readiness and servicemember reintegration.

(K) Assisting members of the Armed Forces and their families find and receive benefits and services from local, State, and Federal programs and nonprofit programs for assistance with military family readiness and servicemember reintegration, including referral services.

(L) Development of strategies and programs that recognize the need for follow-up services for reintegrating members of the Armed Forces and their families for extended periods following deployments, including between deployments.

(M) Assisting members of the Armed Forces and their families receive services and assistance from the Department of Veterans Affairs, including referral services.

(5) OUTREACH.—A recipient of a grant under this subsection shall carry out a program of outreach to members of the Armed Forces and their families with respect to the services offered in accordance with paragraph (3) before, during, and after deployment of such members of the Armed Forces.

(6) SELECTION OF GRANT RECIPIENTS.—

(A) APPLICATION.—An eligible entity seeking a grant under the pilot program shall submit to the Secretary of Defense an application therefor in such form and in such manner as the Secretary considers appropriate.

(B) ELEMENTS.—An application submitted under subparagraph (A) shall include such elements as the Secretary considers appropriate.

(C) PRIORITY.—In selecting eligible entities to receive grants under the pilot program, the Secretary of Defense shall give priority to eligible entities that propose programs with a focus on personal outreach by trained staff (with preference given to veterans and, in particular, veterans of combat) conducted in person to members of the Armed Forces and their families.

(7) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is authorized to be appropriated $30,000,000 for the Secretary of Defense to carry out this subsection.

(c) SURVEYS OF MILITARY FAMILIES.—Section 1782(a) of title 10, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in the heading, by striking ''AUTHORITY'' and inserting ''IN GENERAL''; and

(2) by striking ''may conduct surveys'' in the matter preceding paragraph (1) and inserting ''shall, in fiscal year 2009 and not less often than once every three fiscal years thereafter, conduct surveys''.

SA 2187. Mr. SANDERS submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 2019 proposed by Mr. LEVIN (for himself and Mr. MCCAIN) to the amendment SA 2011 proposed by Mr. NELSON of Nebraska (for Mr. LEVIN) to the bill H.R. 1585, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

Beginning on page 34, strike line 8 and all that follows through page 51, line 24 and insert the following:

SEC. 1631. COMPREHENSIVE PLANS ON PREVENTION, DIAGNOSIS, MITIGATION, AND TREATMENT OF TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY AND POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER IN MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES.

(a) PLANS REQUIRED.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Defense shall, in accordance with subsection (c), submit to the

congressional defense committees one or more comprehensive plans for programs and activities of the Department of Defense to prevent, diagnose, mitigate, treat, and otherwise respond to traumatic brain injury (TBI) and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in members of the Armed Forces.

(b) ELEMENTS.—Each plan submitted under subsection (a) shall include comprehensive proposals of the Department on the following:

(1) The designation by the Secretary of Defense of a lead agent or executive agent for the Department to coordinate development and implementation of the plan.

(2) The improvement of personnel protective equipment for members of the Armed Forces in order to prevent traumatic brain injury.

(3) The improvement of methods and mechanisms for the detection and treatment of traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress disorder in members of the Armed Forces in the field.

(4) The requirements for research on traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress disorder, including (in particular) research on pharmacological approaches to treatment for traumatic brain injury or post-traumatic stress disorder, as applicable, and the allocation of priorities among such research.

(5) The development, adoption, and deployment of diagnostic criteria for the detection and evaluation of the range of traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress disorder in members of the Armed Forces, which criteria shall be employed uniformly across the military departments in all applicable circumstances, including provision of clinical care and assessment of future deployability of members of the Armed Forces.

(6) The development and deployment of effective means of assessing traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress disorder in members of the Armed Forces, including a system of pre-deployment and post-deployment screenings of cognitive ability in members for the detection of cognitive impairment, as required by the amendments made by section 1632.

(7) The development and deployment of effective means of managing and monitoring members of the Armed Forces with traumatic brain injury or post-traumatic stress disorder in the receipt of care for traumatic brain injury or post-traumatic stress disorder, as applicable, including the monitoring and assessment of treatment and outcomes.

(8) The development and deployment of an education and awareness training initiative designed to reduce the negative stigma associated with traumatic brain injury, post-traumatic stress disorder, and mental health treatment.

(9) The provision of education and outreach to families of members of the Armed Forces with traumatic brain injury or post-traumatic stress disorder on a range of matters relating to traumatic brain injury or post-traumatic stress disorder, as applicable, including detection, mitigation, and treatment.

(10) The assessment of the current capabilities of the Department for the prevention, diagnosis, mitigation, treatment, and rehabilitation of traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress disorder in members of the Armed Forces.

(11) The identification of gaps in current capabilities of the Department for the prevention, diagnosis, mitigation, treatment, and rehabilitation of traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress disorder in members of the Armed Forces.

(12) The identification of the resources required for the Department in fiscal years 2009 thru 2013 to address the gaps in capabilities identified under paragraph (11).

(13) The development of joint planning among the Department of Defense, the military departments, and the Department of Veterans Affairs for the prevention, diagnosis, mitigation, treatment, and rehabilitation of traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress disorder in members of the Armed Forces, including planning for the seamless transition of such members from care through the Department of Defense to care through the Department of Veterans Affairs.

(14) A requirement that exposure to a blast or blasts be recorded in the records of members of the Armed Forces.

(15) The development of clinical practice guidelines for the diagnosis and treatment of blast injuries in members of the Armed Forces, including, but not limited to, traumatic brain injury.

(c) COORDINATION IN DEVELOPMENT.—

(1) SECRETARY OF THE ARMY.—Each plan submitted under subsection (a) shall be developed in coordination with the Secretary of the Army (who was designated by the Secretary of Defense as executive agent for the prevention, mitigation, and treatment of blast injuries under section 256 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2006 (Public Law 109–163; 119 Stat. 3181; 10 U.S.C. 1071 note)).

(2) SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.—Each plan submitted under subsection (a) shall be developed jointly with the Secretary of Veterans Affairs for the elements described in paragraphs (3) through (10) and paragraph (13) of subsection (b).

(d) ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES.—In carrying out programs and activities for the prevention, diagnosis, mitigation, and treatment of traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress disorder in members of the Armed Forces, the Secretary of Defense shall—

(1) examine the results of the recently completed Phase 2 study, funded by the National Institutes of Health, on the use of progesterone for acute traumatic brain injury;

(2) determine if Department of Defense funding for a Phase 3 clinical trial on the use of progesterone for acute traumatic brain injury, or for further research regarding the use of progesterone or its metabolites for treatment of traumatic brain injury, is warranted;

(3) provide for the collaboration of the Department of Defense, as appropriate, in clinical trials and research on pharmacological approaches to treatment for traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress disorder that is conducted by other departments and agencies of the Federal Government; and

(4) to the maximum extent practicable, consult, coordinate, and partner with the Department of Veterans Affairs in carrying out research on traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress disorder.

SEC. 1632. IMPROVEMENT OF MEDICAL TRACKING SYSTEM FOR MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES DEPLOYED OVERSEAS.

(a) PROTOCOL FOR ASSESSMENT OF COGNITIVE FUNCTIONING.—

(1) PROTOCOL REQUIRED.—Subsection (b) of section 1074f of title 10, United States Code, is amended—

(A) in paragraph (2), by adding at the end the following new subparagraph:

''(C) An assessment of post-traumatic stress disorder.''; and

(B) by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

''(3)(A) The Secretary shall establish for purposes of subparagraphs (B) and (C) of paragraph (2) a protocol for the predeployment assessment and documentation of the cognitive (including memory) functioning of a member who is deployed outside the United States in order to facilitate the assessment of the postdeployment cognitive (including memory) functioning of the member.

''(B) The protocol under subparagraph (A) shall include appropriate mechanisms to permit the differential diagnosis of traumatic brain injury in members returning from deployment in a combat zone.''.

(2) PILOT PROJECTS.—(A) In developing the protocol required by paragraph (3) of section 1074f(b) of title 10, United States Code (as amended by paragraph (1) of this subsection), for purposes of assessments for traumatic brain injury, the Secretary of Defense shall conduct up to three pilot projects to evaluate various mechanisms for use in the protocol for such purposes. One of the mechanisms to be so evaluated shall be a computer-based assessment tool.

(B) Not later than 60 days after the completion of the pilot projects conducted under this paragraph, the Secretary shall submit to the appropriate committees of Congress a report on the pilot projects. The report shall include—

(i) a description of the pilot projects so conducted;

(ii) an assessment of the results of each such pilot project; and

(iii) a description of any mechanisms evaluated under each such pilot project that will incorporated into the protocol.

(C) Not later than 180 days after completion of the pilot projects conducted under this paragraph, the Secretary shall establish a mechanism for implementing any mechanism evaluated under such a pilot project that is selected for incorporation in the protocol.

(D) There is hereby authorized to be appropriated to the Department of Defense, $3,000,000 for the pilot projects authorized by this paragraph. Of the amount so authorized to be appropriated, not more than $1,000,000 shall be available for any particular pilot project.

(b) QUALITY ASSURANCE.—Subsection (d)(2) of section 1074f of title 10, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new subparagraph:

''(F) The diagnosis and treatment of traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress disorder.''.

(c) STANDARDS FOR DEPLOYMENT.—Subsection (f) of such section is amended—

(1) in the subsection heading, by striking ''MENTAL HEALTH''; and

(2) in paragraph (2)(B), by striking ''or'' and inserting '', traumatic brain injury, or''.

SEC. 1633. CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE IN THE PREVENTION, DIAGNOSIS, MITIGATION, TREATMENT, AND REHABILITATION OF TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY AND POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER.

(a) CENTER OF EXCELLENCE ON TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY.—Chapter 55 of title 10, United States Code, is amended by inserting after section 1105 the following new section:

''§ 1105a. Center of Excellence in Prevention, Diagnosis, Mitigation, Treatment, and Rehabilitation of Traumatic Brain Injury

''(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Defense shall establish within the Department of Defense a center of excellence in the prevention, diagnosis, mitigation, treatment, and rehabilitation of traumatic brain injury (TBI), including mild, moderate, and severe traumatic brain injury, to carry out the responsibilities specified in subsection (c). The center shall be known as a 'Center of Excellence in Prevention, Diagnosis, Mitigation, Treatment, and Rehabilitation of Traumatic Brain Injury'.

''(b) PARTNERSHIPS.—The Secretary of Defense shall ensure that the Center collaborates to the maximum extent practicable

with the Department of Veterans Affairs to carry out the responsibilities specified in subsection (c). The Secretary of Defense shall also authorize the Center to enter in such partnerships, agreements, or other arrangements as the Secretary considers appropriate with institutions of higher education and other appropriate public and private entities (including international entities) to carry out the responsibilities specified in subsection (c).

''(c) RESPONSIBILITIES.—The Center shall have responsibilities as follows:

''(1) To direct and oversee, based on expert research, the development and implementation of a long-term, comprehensive plan and strategy for the Department of Defense for the prevention, diagnosis, mitigation, treatment, and rehabilitation of traumatic brain injury.

''(2) To provide for the development, testing, and dissemination within the Department of best practices for the treatment of traumatic brain injury.

''(3) To provide guidance for the mental health system of the Department in determining the mental health and neurological health personnel required to provide quality mental health care for members of the armed forces with traumatic brain injury.

''(4) To establish, implement, and oversee a comprehensive program to train mental health and neurological health professionals of the Department in the treatment of traumatic brain injury.

''(5) To facilitate advancements in the study of the short-term and long-term psychological effects of traumatic brain injury.

''(6) To disseminate within the military medical treatment facilities of the Department best practices for training mental health professionals, including neurological health professionals, with respect to traumatic brain injury.

''(7) To conduct basic science and translational research on traumatic brain injury for the purposes of understanding the etiology of traumatic brain injury and developing preventive interventions and new treatments.

''(8) To develop outreach strategies and treatments for families of members of the armed forces with traumatic brain injury in order to mitigate the negative impacts of traumatic brain injury on such family members and to support the recovery of such members from traumatic brain injury.

''(9) To conduct research on the unique mental health needs of women members of the armed forces with traumatic brain injury and develop treatments to meet any needs identified through such research.

''(10) To conduct research on the unique mental health needs of ethnic minority members of the armed forces with traumatic brain injury and develop treatments to meet any needs identified through such research.

''(11) To conduct research on the mental health needs of families of members of the armed forces with traumatic brain injury and develop treatments to meet any needs identified through such research.

''(12) To conduct longitudinal studies (using imaging technology and other proven research methods) on members of the armed forces with traumatic brain injury to identify early signs of Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, or other manifestations of neurodegeneration in such members, which studies should be conducted in coordination with the studies authorized by section 721 of the John Warner National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2007 (Public Law 109–364; 120 Stat. 2294) and other studies of the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs that address the connection between exposure to combat and the development of Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, and other neurodegenerative disorders.

''(13) To develop and oversee a long-term plan to increase the number of mental health and neurological health professionals within the Department in order to facilitate the meeting by the Department of the needs of members of the armed forces with traumatic brain injury until their transition to care and treatment from the Department of Veterans Affairs.

''(14) Such other responsibilities as the Secretary shall specify.''.

(b) CENTER OF EXCELLENCE ON POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER.—Chapter 55 of such title is further amended by inserting after section 1105a, as added by subsection (a), the following new section:

''§ 1105b. Center of Excellence in Prevention, Diagnosis, Mitigation, Treatment, and Rehabilitation of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

''(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Defense shall establish within the Department of Defense a center of excellence in the prevention, diagnosis, mitigation, treatment, and rehabilitation of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), including mild, moderate, and severe post-traumatic stress disorder, to carry out the responsibilities specified in subsection (c). The center shall be known as a 'Center of Excellence in Prevention, Diagnosis, Mitigation, Treatment, and Rehabilitation of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder'.

''(b) PARTNERSHIPS.—The Secretary of Defense shall ensure that the Center collaborates to the maximum extent practicable with the Department of Veterans Affairs to carry out the responsibilities specified in subsection (c). The Secretary shall also authorize the Center to enter in such partnerships, agreements, or other arrangements as the Secretary considers appropriate with institutions of higher education and other appropriate public and private entities (including international entities) to carry out the responsibilities specified in subsection (c).

''(c) RESPONSIBILITIES.—The Center shall have responsibilities as follows:

''(1) To direct and oversee, based on expert research, the development and implementation of a long-term, comprehensive plan and strategy for the Department of Defense for the prevention, diagnosis, mitigation, treatment, and rehabilitation of post-traumatic stress disorder.

''(2) To provide for the development, testing, and dissemination within the Department of best practices for the treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder.

''(3) To provide guidance for the mental health system of the Department in determining the mental health and neurological health personnel required to provide quality mental health care for members of the armed forces with post-traumatic stress disorder.

''(4) To establish, implement, and oversee a comprehensive program to train mental health and neurological health professionals of the Department in the treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder.

''(5) To facilitate advancements in the study of the short-term and long-term psychological effects of post-traumatic stress disorder.

''(6) To disseminate within the military medical treatment facilities of the Department best practices for training mental health professionals, including neurological health professionals, with respect to post-traumatic stress disorder.

''(7) To conduct basic science and translational research on post-traumatic stress disorder for the purposes of understanding the etiology of post-traumatic stress disorder and developing preventive interventions and new treatments.

''(8) To develop outreach strategies and treatments for families of members of the armed forces with post-traumatic stress disorder in order to mitigate the negative impacts of traumatic brain injury on such family members and to support the recovery of such members from post-traumatic stress disorder.

''(9) To conduct research on the unique mental health needs of women members of the armed forces, including victims of sexual assault, with post-traumatic stress disorder and develop treatments to meet any needs identified through such research.

''(10) To conduct research on the unique mental health needs of ethnic minority members of the armed forces with post-traumatic stress disorder and develop treatments to meet any needs identified through such research.

''(11) To conduct research on the mental health needs of families of members of the armed forces with post-traumatic stress disorder and develop treatments to meet any needs identified through such research.

''(12) To develop and oversee a long-term plan to increase the number of mental health and neurological health professionals within the Department in order to facilitate the meeting by the Department of the needs of members of the armed forces with post-traumatic stress disorder until their transition to care and treatment from the Department of Veterans Affairs.

''(13) Such other responsibilities as the Secretary shall specify.''.

(c) JOINT DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE AND DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER RESEARCH INITIATIVE.—Chapter 55 of such title is further amended by inserting after section 1105b, as added by subsection (b), the following new section:

''SEC. 1105c. JOINT DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE AND DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER RESEARCH INITIATIVE.

''(a) The Center of Excellence in Prevention, Diagnosis, Mitigation, Treatment and Rehabilitation of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and the National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder of the Department of Veterans Affairs (in this section referred to as the 'Centers') shall jointly carry out a program of research to be known as the 'Joint Department of Defense and Department of Veterans Affairs Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Research Initiative' (in this section referred to as the 'Research Initiative').

''(b) The Research Initiative to be conducted by the Centers shall—

''(1) be jointly developed and coordinated by the Centers;

''(2) be complementary to the research otherwise being conducted by the respective Centers;

''(3) to the extent practicable, focus on areas of research that would benefit from the joint participation of both Centers;

''(4) research and promote the effective transition for members of the armed forces from receipt of care from the Department of Defense to receipt of care from the Department of Veterans Affairs;

''(5) consider, as appropriate, any special needs of women who are members of the armed forces or are veterans, members of the armed forces who live in rural areas, veterans who live in rural areas, Reserves, and veterans; and

''(6) promote cooperation, information sharing, and a reduction in duplication of efforts between the Department of Defense, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and other relevant Federal entities.

''(c) PARTNERSHIPS.—The Centers may enter into such partnerships, agreements, or

other arrangements as the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs consider appropriate with the Center of Excellence in Prevention, Diagnosis, Mitigation, Treatment, and Rehabilitation of Traumatic Brain Injury, appropriate entities within the Department of Veterans Affairs, or other Federal entities to carry out the purpose of this section.''.

(d) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 55 of such title is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 1105 the following new items:

''1105a. Center of Excellence in Prevention, Diagnosis, Mitigation, Treatment, and Rehabilitation of Traumatic Brain Injury.

''1105b. Center of Excellence in Prevention, Diagnosis, Mitigation, Treatment, and Rehabilitation of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

''1105c. Joint Department of Defense and Department of Veterans Affairs Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Research Initiative.''.

(e) REPORTS ON ESTABLISHMENT.—

(1) REPORT BY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Defense shall submit to Congress a report on the establishment of the Center of Excellence in Prevention, Diagnosis, Mitigation, Treatment, and Rehabilitation of Traumatic Brain Injury required by section 1105a of title 10, United States Code (as added by subsection (a)), and the establishment of the Center of Excellence in Prevention, Diagnosis, Mitigation, Treatment, and Rehabilitation of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder required by section 1105b of title 10, United States Code (as added by subsection (b)). The report shall, for each such Center—

(A) describe in detail the activities and proposed activities of such Center; and

(B) assess the progress of such Center in discharging the responsibilities of such Center.

(2) JOINT REPORT BY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE AND SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.—Not later than 180 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall jointly submit to Congress a report on the establishment of the Joint Department of Defense and Department of Veterans Affairs Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Research Initiative required by section 1105c of title 10, United States Code (as added by subsection (c)). The report shall—

(A) describe in detail the activities and proposed activities of such Research Initiative; and

(B) assess the progress of such Research Initiative in discharging the responsibilities of such Research Initiative.

(f) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is hereby authorized to be appropriated for fiscal year 2008 for the Department of Defense for Defense Health Program, $15,000,000, of which—

(1) $5,000,000 shall be available for the Center of Excellence in Prevention, Diagnosis, Mitigation, Treatment, and Rehabilitation of Traumatic Brain Injury required by section 1105a of title 10, United States Code;

(2) $5,000,000 shall be available for the Center of Excellence in Prevention, Diagnosis, Mitigation, Treatment, and Rehabilitation of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder required by section 1105b of title 10, United States Code; and

(3) $5,000,000 shall be available for the Joint Department of Defense and Department of Veterans Affairs Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Research Initiative required by section 1105c of title 10, United States Code.

SA 2188. Mr. LIEBERMAN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 1585, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the end of subtitle B of title II, add the following:

SEC. 214. ASSESSMENT OF ACQUISITION OF THE COMBAT SEARCH AND RESCUE REPLACEMENT VEHICLE.

(a) IN GENERAL.—No amounts authorized to be appropriated for the Department of Defense may be obligated or expended for a contract for the procurement of the Combat Search and Rescue Replacement Vehicle (CSAR-X) until the later of—

(1) 60 legislative days after the date of the approval of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics; or

(2) the submittal by the Secretary of the Defense to the congressional defense committees of written notice in accordance with established procedures.

(b) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of Congress that, in addition to the limitation in subsection (a), no amounts authorized to be appropriated for the Department of Defense should be obligated or expended for a contract for the procurement of the Combat Search and Rescue Replacement Vehicle until the resolution by the Comptroller General of all pending bid protests with respect to the Combat Search and Rescue Replacement Vehicle.

NOTICE OF HEARING

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, I would like to announce for the information of the Senate and the public that a legislative hearing has been scheduled before the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

The hearing will be held on Thursday, July 19, 2007, at 9:30 a.m. in room SD–366 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building.

The purpose of this hearing is to receive testimony on S. 1634, a bill to implement further the Act approving the Covenant to Establish a Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands in Political Union with the United States of America, and for other purposes.

Because of the limited time available for the hearing, witnesses may testify by invitation only. However, those wishing to submit written testimony for the hearing record should send two copies of their testimony to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, United States Senate, Washington, DC 20510–6150, or by email to britni_rillera@energy.senate.gov.

For further information, please contact Allen Stayman at (202) 224–7865 or Britni Rillera at (202) 224–1219.

AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

AD HOC SUBCOMMITTEE ON STATE, LOCAL AND PRIVATE SECTOR FOR PREPAREDNESS AND INTEGRATION

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Ad Hoc Subcommittee on State, Local, and Private Sector Preparedness and Integration of the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs be authorized to meet on Thursday, July 12, 2007, at 2 p.m., in order to conduct a hearing entitled ''Private Sector Preparedness, Part II: protecting our critical infrastructure.''

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

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation be authorized to hold a hearing during the session of the Senate on Thursday, July 12, 2007, at 10 a.m., in room 253 of the Russell Senate Office Building.

This hearing will address issues relating to telephone number portability.

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

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources be authorized to hold a hearing during the session of the Senate on Thursday, July 12, 2007, at 9:30 a.m. in room SD–366 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building.

The purpose of this hearing is to consider the nominations of Clarence H. Albright, of South Carolina, to be Under Secretary of Energy; Lisa E. Epifani, of Texas, to be an Assistant Secretary of Energy for Congressional and Intergovernmental Affairs; James L. Caswell, of Idaho, to be Director of the Bureau of Land Management; and Brent T. Wahlquist of Pennsylvania, to be Director of the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement.

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

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Finance be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, July 12, 2007, at 10 a.m., in room 215 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building, to hear testimony on ''Airport Airways Trust Fund: The Future of Aviation Financing.''

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

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR AND PENSIONS

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions be authorized to hold a hearing on the nomination of Dr. James W. Holsinger to be Medical Director and Surgeon General of the Public Health Service, Department of

Health and Human Services during the session of the Senate on Thursday, July 12, 2007 at 10 a.m., room G50 of the Dirksen Senate office building.

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

COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Indian Affairs be authorized to meet on Thursday, July 12, 2007, at 9:30 a.m. in room 485 of the Russell Senate Office Building to conduct an oversight hearing on transportation issues in Indian country.

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

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on the Judiciary be authorized to meet to conduct a markup session on Thursday, July 12, 2007, at 10 a.m. in Dirksen room 226.

Agenda

I. Bills

S.1145, Patent Reform Act of 2007, (Leahy, Hatch, Schumer, Cornyn, Whitehouse);

S.—, School Safety and Law Enforcement Improvements Act, (Chairman's mark);

S. 1060, Recidivism Reduction & Second Chance Act of 2007, (Biden, Specter, Brownback, Leahy, Kennedy, Schumer, Whitehouse, Durbin)

II. Nominations

William Lindsay Osteen, Jr. to be United States District Judge for the Middle District of North Carolina; Martin Karl Reidinger to be United States District Judge for the Western District of North Carolina; Timothy D. DeGiusti to be United States District Judge for the Western District of Oklahoma; Janis Lynn Sammartino to be United States District Judge for the Southern District of California.

III. Resolutions

S. Res. 248, Honoring the life and achievements of Dame Lois Browne Evans (Brown);

Res. 236, Supporting the goals and ideals of the National Anthem Project (Bayh, Craig, Kennedy, Cardin, Durbin).

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

PERMANENT SUBCOMMITTEE ON INVESTIGATIONS

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations of the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs be authorized to meet on Thursday, July 12, 2007, at 9 a.m., in order to conduct a hearing entitled ''Dirty Bomb Vulnerabilities: fake companies, fake licenses, real consequences.''

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

SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Select Committee on Intelligence be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on July 12, 2007 at 2:30 p.m., to hold a closed hearing.

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

SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Subcommittee on National Parks of the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources be authorized to hold a hearing during the session of the Senate on Thursday, July 12, 2007, at 2:30 p.m., in room SD–366 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building.

The purpose of the hearing is to receive testimony on the following bills: S. 488 and H.R. 1100, to revise the boundary of the Carl Sandburg Home National Historic Site in the State of North Carolina; S. 617, to make the National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Pass available at a discount to certain veterans; S. 824 and H.R. 995, to amend Public Law 106–348 to extend the authorization for establishing a memorial in the District of Columbia or its environs to honor veterans who became disabled while serving in the Armed Forces of the United States; S. 955, to establish the Abraham Lincoln National Heritage Area; S. 1148, to establish the Champlain Quadricentennial Commemoration Commission and the Hudson-Fulton 400th Commemoration Commission; S. 1182, to amend the Quinebaug and Shetucket Rivers Valley National Heritage Corridor Act of 1994 to increase the authorization of appropriations and modify the date on which the authority of the Secretary of the Interior terminates under the Act; S. 1380, to designate as wilderness certain land within the Rocky Mountain National Park and to adjust the boundaries of the Indian Peaks Wilderness and the Arapaho National Recreation Area of the Arapaho National Forest in the State of Colorado; and S. 1728, to amend the National Parks and Recreation Act of 1978 to reauthorize the Na Hoa Pili O Kaloko-Honokohau Advisory Commission Reauthorization Act of 2007.

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

SUBCOMMITTEE ON SECURITIES, INSURANCE, AND INVESTMENT

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs, Subcommittee on Securities, Insurance, and Investment be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on July 12, 2007, at 10 a.m., to conduct a hearing entitled ''A Global View: Examining Cross-Border Exchange Mergers.''

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

PRIVILEGES OF THE FLOOR

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that MAJ Pamela Powers, an Air Force fellow in Senator COLLINS' office, be granted the privilege of the floor for the duration of the consideration of H.R. 1585.

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

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Felix Hernandez, a State Department Pearson Fellow with my office, be granted the privilege of the Floor during debate on H.R. 1585, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008, that is currently before us.

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

REMOVAL OF INJUNCTION OF SECRECY—TREATY DOCUMENT NO. 110–4

Mr. BROWN. As in executive session, I ask unanimous consent that the injunction of secrecy be removed from the following treaty transmitted to the Senate on July 12, 2007, by the President of the United States:

International Conventions for the Suppression of Nuclear Terrorism (Treaty Document No. 110–4).

I further ask that the treaty be considered as having been read the first time; that it be referred with accompanying papers to the Committee on Foreign Relations and ordered to be printed; and that the President's message be printed in the RECORD.

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

The message of the President is as follows:

To the Senate of the United States:

I transmit herewith for Senate advice and consent to ratification the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism (the ''Convention''), adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on April 13, 2005, and signed on behalf of the United States of America on September 14, 2005. As of July 3, 2007, 115 countries have signed the Convention and 23 have submitted their instruments of ratification or accession. The Convention entered into force on July 7, 2007. I also transmit for the information of the Senate a report of the Department of State with respect to the Convention.

The Convention imposes binding legal obligations upon States Parties either to submit for prosecution or to extradite any person within their jurisdiction who commits terrorist acts involving radioactive material or a nuclear device as set forth in Article 2 of the Convention, threatens or attempts to commit such an act, participates as an accomplice, organizes or directs others to commit such an offense, or in any other way contributes to the commission of such an offense by a group of persons acting with a common purpose, regardless of where the alleged act took place.

States Parties to the Convention will also be obligated to provide one another legal assistance in investigations or criminal or extradition proceedings brought in respect to the offenses set forth in Article 2, in conformity with any treaties or other arrangements that may exist between them or in accordance with their national law. The

recommended legislation necessary to implement the Convention will be submitted to the Congress separately.

This Convention is important in the campaign against international terrorism. I recommend, therefore, that the Senate give early and favorable consideration to this Convention, subject to the understandings and reservation that are described in the accompanying State Department report.

GEORGE W. BUSH.

THE WHITE HOUSE, *July 12, 2007*.

APPOINTMENTS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair, on behalf of the Majority Leader, pursuant to Public Law 105–83, announces the appointment of the following individual to serve as a member of the National Council on the Arts: Senator SHELDON WHITEHOUSE of Rhode Island.

The Chair, on behalf of the President pro tempore, and upon the recommendation of the majority leader, pursuant to 22 U.S.C. 2761, as amended, appoints the following Senator as a delegate of the Senate delegation to the British-American Interparliamentary Group conference during the 110th Congress: Senator BERNARD SANDERS of Vermont.

The Chair, on behalf of the President pro tempore, and upon the recommendation of the Republican leader, pursuant to 22 U.S.C. 2761, as amended, appoints the following Senators as delegates to the British-American Interparliamentary Group conference during the 110th Congress: Senator CHARLES E. GRASSLEY of Iowa, Senator RICHARD C. SHELBY of Alabama, and Senator JUDD GREGG of New Hampshire.

The Chair, on behalf of the President pro tempore and upon the recommendation of the majority leader, pursuant to Public Law 106–554, appoints the Senator from Virginia (Mr. WEBB) to the Board of Directors of the Vietnam Education Foundation.

The Chair announces, on behalf of the Republican leader, pursuant to the provisions of S. Res. 105 (adopted April 13, 1989), as amended by S. Res. 149 (adopted October 5, 1993), as amended by Public Law 105–275, further amended by S. Res. 75 (adopted March 25, 1999), amended by S. Res. 383 (adopted October 27, 2000), and amended by S. Res. 355 (adopted November 13, 2002), and further amended by S. Res. 480 (adopted November 20, 2004), the appointment of the following Senator to serve as a member of the Senate National Security Working Group for the 110th Congress: Senator NORM COLEMAN of Minnesota.

ORDERS FOR FRIDAY, JULY 13, 2007

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it stand adjourned until 9 a.m., Friday, July 13; that on Friday, following the prayer and pledge, the Journal of proceedings be approved to date, the morning hour be deemed expired and the time for the two leaders reserved for their use later in the day; that the Senate then resume consideration of H.R. 1585 and conduct debate on the Dorgan amendment, No. 2135, as amended, until 9:30 a.m.; that the Senate proceed to vote in relation to the amendment at 9:30 without further intervening action or debate; and that of the time available until then, Senators DORGAN and SUNUNU each control 10 minutes.

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

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 9 A.M. TOMORROW

Mr. BROWN. If there is no further business today, I now ask unanimous consent the Senate stand adjourned under the previous order.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 7:06 p.m., adjourned until Friday, July 13, 2007, at 9 a.m.

NOMINATIONS

Executive nominations received by the Senate July 12, 2007:

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

THOMAS P. O'BRIEN, OF CALIFORNIA, TO BE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY FOR THE CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA FOR THE TERM OF FOUR YEARS VICE DEBRA W. YANG, RESIGNED.

EDWARD MEACHAM YARBROUGH, OF TENNESSEE, TO BE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY FOR THE MIDDLE DISTRICT OF TENNESSEE FOR THE TERM OF FOUR YEARS VICE JAMES K. VINES, RESIGNED.

IN THE AIR FORCE

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE AND FOR REGULAR APPOINTMENT UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTIONS 624 AND 531:

To be lieutenant colonel

JONATHAN L. HUGGINS, 0000

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

To be lieutenant colonel

NELSON L. REYNOLDS, 0000

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR REGULAR APPOINTMENT IN THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 531:

To be lieutenant colonel

BRYAN M. BOYLES, 0000

THE FOLLOWING NAMED INDIVIDUAL FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE REGULAR AIR FORCE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 531(A):

To be major

MICHAEL S. AGABEGI, 0000

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

To be major

FREDDIE M. GOLDWIRE, 0000

THE FOLLOWING NAMED INDIVIDUALS FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE GRADES INDICATED IN THE REGULAR AIR FORCE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 531(A):

To be lieutenant colonel

VAL C. HAGANS, 0000
SAMUEL D. TRESSLER III, 0000
MICHAEL B. VITT, 0000

To be major

RUJING HAN, 0000

THE FOLLOWING NAMED INDIVIDUALS FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE GRADES INDICATED IN THE REGULAR AIR FORCE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 531(A):

To be lieutenant colonel

KENT S. THOMPSON, 0000
AIXA M. TORRESRAMIREZ, 0000

To be major

JAVIER SANTIAGO, 0000

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

To be major

THOMAS S. BUTLER, 0000
JENNIFER A. FIEDERER, 0000
WENDY S. KIERPIEC, 0000
ADAM W. SCHNICKER, 0000

IN THE ARMY

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR REGULAR APPOINTMENT IN THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY MEDICAL CORPS UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTIONS 531 AND 3064:

To be colonel

STEPHEN T. SAUTER, 0000

THE FOLLOWING NAMED INDIVIDUAL FOR REGULAR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY NURSE CORPS UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTIONS 531 AND 3064:

To be colonel

TERRY D. BONNER, 0000

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY MEDICAL CORPS UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTIONS 624 AND 3064:

To be lieutenant colonel

MARK TRAWINSKI, 0000

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY NURSE CORPS UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTIONS 624 AND 3064:

To be major

FRANCISCO C. DOMINICCI, 0000

THE FOLLOWING NAMED INDIVIDUAL FOR REGULAR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY MEDICAL SPECIALIST CORPS UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTIONS 531 AND 3064:

To be major

JOSEPH E. JONES, 0000

THE FOLLOWING NAMED INDIVIDUAL FOR REGULAR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY MEDICAL CORPS UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTIONS 531 AND 3064:

To be major

COLIN S. MCKENZIE, 0000

THE FOLLOWING NAMED INDIVIDUALS FOR REGULAR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY NURSE CORPS UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTIONS 531 AND 3064:

To be major

LOZAY FOOTS, 0000
JOSEPH L. KARHAN, 0000

THE FOLLOWING NAMED INDIVIDUALS FOR REGULAR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY DENTAL CORPS UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTIONS 531 AND 3064:

To be major

LOUIS R. KUBALA, 0000
THOMAS K. SPEARS, 0000

THE FOLLOWING NAMED INDIVIDUALS FOR REGULAR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY DENTAL CORPS UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTIONS 531 AND 3064:

To be major

WILLIAM A. MCNAUGHTON, 0000
MICHAEL B. VITT, 0000

THE FOLLOWING NAMED INDIVIDUALS FOR REGULAR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADES INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY MEDICAL CORPS UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTIONS 531 AND 3064:

To be lieutenant colonel

JAMES E. COLE, 0000

To be major

MEJAH S. SOONG, 0000
MICHAEL F. TRAVER, 0000

THE FOLLOWING NAMED INDIVIDUALS FOR REGULAR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADES INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY MEDICAL SERVICE CORPS UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTIONS 531 AND 3064:

To be lieutenant colonel

DANIEL L. DUECKER, 0000

To be major

DOUGLAS L. WEEKS, 0000

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY DENTAL CORPS UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTIONS 624 AND 3064:

To be major

JOSEPH A. BERNIERRODRIGUEZ, 0000
CHRISTOPHER A. BLOUNT, 0000
EDWARD T. BREECHER, 0000
CYNTHIA BRITO, 0000

JASON BULLOCK, 0000
BRADLEY N. BUMA, 0000
CHRISTINE L. CERAR, 0000
KAREN B. CHANDLER, 0000
PAUL COLTHIRST, 0000
LUKE K. DALZELL, 0000
CHAD V. DAWSON, 0000
KLAUS EASTMAN, 0000
DEREK HATHAWAY, 0000
MATTHEW T. HENEHAN, 0000
STEPHEN JENSEN, 0000
YOUNG S. KANG, 0000
CANDACE KANN, 0000
DENNIS J. KANTANEN, 0000
DAVID A. KELLER, 0000
JASON KENNON, 0000
PETER KIM, 0000
CHARLES C. LAMBERT, 0000
DAVID J. MALOLEY, 0000
SHELLY D. MCAVOY, 0000
BENJAMIN R. METHVIN, 0000
KENDALL R. MOWER, 0000
JUSTIN N. NAYLOR, 0000
JOHNATHAN NEWCOMB, 0000
WADE H. OWENS, 0000
MANUEL PELAEZ, 0000
MICHAEL PICCIONE, 0000
CLINT RAU, 0000
BEN B. ROSS, 0000
CONSTANCE SEDON, 0000
JOSEPH S. SEILER, 0000
KATHLEEN B. SEILER, 0000
THOMAS STARK, 0000
MICHAEL P. THOMPSON, 0000
PERCY TORKORNOO, 0000
STEPHEN TURELLA, 0000
LEIGH D. VONWALD, 0000
ARIEL WARTOFSKY, 0000
LEWIS WAYT, 0000
EDWARD M. WISE, JR., 0000

IN THE NAVY

THE FOLLOWING NAMED INDIVIDUAL FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY RESERVE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

To be captain

BRUCE S. LAVIN, 0000

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY RESERVE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

To be captain

CHRISTOPHER R. DAVIS, 0000
ALAN J. FERGUSON, 0000

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

To be commander

ROBERT D. CLERY, 0000
MARCIA T. COLEMAN, 0000
GARFIELD M. SICARD, 0000

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

THE INTRODUCTION OF A RESOLUTION TO ESTABLISH NATIONAL 9–1–1 EDUCATION MONTH

HON. ANNA G. ESHOO

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 11, 2007

Ms. ESHOO. Madam Speaker, I'm proud to introduce a resolution to establish a National 9–1–1 Education Month.

Forty years ago President Johnson's Commission on Law Enforcement and Justice recommended that a single, nationwide telephone number be established for reporting emergencies—9–1–1. Since then, 9–1–1 has been used by millions of people across the country to quickly and efficiently contact their local fire and police departments, as well as report emergencies in their communities. Over 200 million emergency calls are made each year through 6,000 9–1–1 public safety answering points serving more than 3,000 counties.

As the connection between the eyes and ears of the public and the emergency response system in the U.S., 9–1–1 answering points are often the first to know of emergencies caused by natural disasters to national security threats, making 9–1–1 a vital homeland security asset.

Educating people of all ages and backgrounds about 9–1–1 is crucial to the effectiveness of our emergency response system. It is especially important for vulnerable populations . . . children, the deaf and hard of hearing, and those with limited English skills . . . to understand and feel comfortable with using 9–1–1.

A National 9–1–1 Education Month will encourage the development of public awareness events, advertising to the public, targeted outreach to schools, and training activities for parents and teachers. The deaf and hard of hearing are increasingly using text, video and instant messaging to access 9–1–1 operators. With such an effective and comprehensive emergency network, everyone deserves to learn how to access it.

As co-chairs of the E9–1–1 Caucus, Mr. SHIMKUS and I understand the importance of the 9–1–1 emergency network to the public safety and security of our country and this resolution will help to ensure that all Americans can access these critical services in an emergency. I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting a National 9–1–1 Education Month.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2008

SPEECH OF

HON. CATHY McMORRIS RODGERS

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 27, 2007

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 2643) making appropriations for the Department of the Interior, environment, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2008, and for other purposes:

Mrs. McMORRIS RODGERS. Mr. Chairman, I wish to voice my support for a very important program to Eastern Washington, the Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) program.

The PILT program is essential for the livelihood of our rural communities in Eastern Washington. Ferry County is 86 percent publicly owned. The PILT funding that Ferry County receives accounts for nearly two thirds of their budget to provide essential services.

The government owns 73 percent of Okanogan County. More impressive is the amount of land owned by the public—over one and a half million acres. According to the Okanogan County Assessor, the loss in property taxes amounts to more than $4.5 million every year. That's a loss of funding for police, search and rescue, and emergency management.

I could continue to list additional examples since all 12 counties I represent receive funding from this program, but I want to describe the importance from someone who is on the ground and impacted by these decisions, Stevens County Treasurer Sue Harnasch.

She wrote, "The Federal Government has long recognized and accepted that Federal land holdings are a burden on local governments and that funding is necessary to provide services needed to access and use those lands. County taxpayers have been left to fend for themselves, subsidizing public services on Federal land with local property taxes."

Let's stop placing the burden on local communities and start keeping our promise.

HONORING THOMAS JEFFERSON HIGH SCHOOL MEN'S VARSITY CREW TEAM

HON. TOM DAVIS

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 11, 2007

Mr. TOM DAVIS of Virginia. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology Men's Varsity Eight Crew team, who represented the United States in the Princess Elizabeth Challenge Cup at the Henley Royal Regatta in England on July 4, 2007.

I had the honor of meeting these tremendous students on May 12, 2007, after they won the Virginia Scholastic Championship, the first of their many victories during their outstanding season. The Thomas Jefferson Colonials' Varsity Eight earned an invitation to the Princess Elizabeth Challenge Cup after finishing a flawless season with a gold medal at the Scholastic Rowing Association of America National Championships in Camden, New Jersey. The TJ Crew Team also added the prestigious Stotesbury Cup Regatta in Philadelphia to their list of victories after finishing first among 850 boats from 177 schools in the world's largest high school rowing event.

Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology was established in 1985 as a Virginia Governor's School for Math, Science and Technology. Thomas Jefferson leads the Nation in SAT scores, National Merit Semifinalists, and advance placement credits earned. This highly selective program serves over 1,800 students from Fairfax and surrounding counties in Northern Virginia. No student is selected on the basis of athletic ability, and no one on the dynastical crew had even rowed before coming to TJ. Despite the State's longest school day and most demanding science and mathematics program, the TJ varsity men's crew practice diligently every afternoon at Sandy Run Regional Park on the Occoquan River.

Even with all their athletic success, the team's eight seniors have a truly impressive academic record with five National Merit Finalists, two Eagle Scouts, and one INTEL Science Fair Semi-Finalist. For their exemplary academic and athletic achievements, I would like to extend my most heartfelt congratulations to Ben Ranard, Dan Muir, Tom DellaFera, Lee Rumpf, Ty Otto, Marcos Carzolio, Christian Klein, Will Zeng, Raja Goel and Colin Haas. These young men are led by the varsity coach Jim Granger and assistant coach Andrew Fiebig.

After concluding a remarkable season in the U.S., the TJ Crew team ventured into international waters this summer to compete for the Princess Elizabeth Challenge Cup at the annual Henley Royal Regatta in Oxfordshire, England. In a championship dominated by British schools, TJ aimed to become America's first public high school to win the international title in over 38 years. The TJ Crew team got off to a strong start in the first round and continued to gain momentum as they upset England's Winchester College to break through to the "elite" eight. Despite their best efforts, TJ's bid for the Princess Elizabeth Cup fell short after a heart-rending defeat to Brentwood College School, the Canadian national champions.

Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to honor Thomas Jefferson High School Men's Varsity Eight Crew for their remarkable success this season.

RECOGNIZING DELLA E. MOSES

HON. SAM GRAVES

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 11, 2007

Mr. GRAVES. Madam Speaker, I proudly ask you to join me in recognizing Della E. Moses of Elmo, Missouri. Della celebrated her 99th birthday on July 10, 2007 and it is my privilege to offer her my warmest regards on achieving this important milestone. Della is a fine citizen of Missouri and the Elmo community. It is an honor to represent Della in the

United States Congress, and I wish her all the best on this birthday and many more in the future.

HONORING AMERICA'S SECOND HARVEST

HON. RON LEWIS

OF KENTUCKY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 11, 2007

Mr. LEWIS of Kentucky. Madam Speaker, I rise today to congratulate America's Second Harvest of Kentucky's Heartland Food Bank, located in Elizabethtown, Kentucky, for recently celebrating 25 years of charitable service to central and southern central Kentucky.

America's Second Harvest began as a small operation in the basement of Elizabethtown's Christ Episcopal Church in 1982. Founding members struggled at first to raise enough money just to reserve a post office box. Support quickly grew as the community began to understand the mission of the organization.

Over the last 25 years, America's Second Harvest has received and distributed approximately 100 million pounds of donated food and groceries to 170 charity organizations in 35 Kentucky counties.

The food bank now occupies a large warehouse in Elizabethtown, with plans under consideration to extend the facility by another 10,000 square feet. America's Second Harvest representatives are also working to expand the BackPack program, an initiative that offers bags of food to schoolchildren who are likely to go hungry on weekends.

I applaud America's Second Harvest, particularly founders Dot Hansen and Rita Jenkins, for their vision, determination, and continued cooperative efforts to assist those in need.

It is my great privilege to recognize America's Second Harvest today, before the entire U.S. House of Representatives, on the occasion of their 25th anniversary. Their unique dedication to combat hunger in Kentucky communities makes them an outstanding organization worthy of our collective appreciation and respect.

IN REMEMBRANCE OF ROBERT SHAWN JOSLIN

HON. DENNIS J. KUCINICH

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 11, 2007

Mr. KUCINICH. Madam Speaker, I ask that my colleagues join me in remembering Robert Shawn Joslin, a young man whom I knew well as a volunteer on my political campaigns. I am deeply saddened to learn of his untimely death at the age of 26. Last Saturday, Shawn was murdered at the McDonald's restaurant where he worked.

Shawn was a 2000 Lakewood High School graduate. He played the tuba in the Lakewood High School marching band. He loved sports, especially the Cleveland Cavaliers basketball and the Cleveland Indians baseball teams. He ushered at Indians games at Jacobs Field and got his 2 nieces, Ashley and Alexianna, interested in baseball.

For the last 4 years, he worked at McDonald's. For 2 years he worked at the restaurant in Westlake and for the last 2 years, he worked at the Lakewood McDonald's, closer to his home. He was up for a promotion before he was killed there.

Since his high school years, Shawn was active in civic affairs. He was a tireless campaigner on behalf of myself and other candidates for public office in the Cleveland area. Shawn was always friendly and quick to greet people he knew from the campaigns or from his other activities in sports, music, school, or work. He had a positive attitude and an infectious smile. He had many friends and family members who loved him deeply.

Madam Speaker and colleagues, please join me and Shawn's parents, family members, and many friends in mourning the loss of this positive young man.

HOME OWNERSHIP AND RESPONSIBLE LENDING

SPEECH OF

HON. DANNY K. DAVIS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 10, 2007

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of House Resolution 526, ''Supporting Ownership and Responsible Lending.'' Home ownership plays an integral role helping this Nation's citizens realize the American Dream.

Now more than ever we must increase the awareness of risky loans to protect present and future homeowners. Home ownership is a vital part of our Nation's economy. It benefits neighborhoods by raising property values and providing economic and social capital.

Nationally, in 2006, a record setting 75,000,000 Americans owned homes. In the 7th District of Illinois, there are 238,000 housing units. Of those 238,000 units 49 percent are owner occupied and 51 percent are renter occupied. Fifty-four percent of those who rent spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing.

The housing boom from 2001 to 2006, lower mortgage rates and increased liquidity in the secondary mortgage market, all led to the growth of sub-prime mortgage industries. These secondary mortgage markets created home ownership opportunities for lower income families, people with little or no credit histories, and families without any access to down payments.

The downside to these newly formed opportunities would be the birth of predatory lending. This occurs when lenders hide the true cost of sub-prime loans from unsophisticated borrowers. These unfair practitioners are the main reason for the sudden wave of foreclosures. Foreclosure, when considering both legal and administrative expenses, would cost the borrower an average of $7,200.

In Chicago alone, due to the predatory lending practices of various institutions, the rate of foreclosure on sub-prime loans is 19.2 percent; this is up 37 percent from approximately 5 years ago. From my understanding the property value surrounding the foreclosed home is devalued by $30,000.

This would cause responsible lenders to lose thousand of dollars per foreclosure. Another negative aspect of this sudden rise in foreclosures is the costly affects that it has on local government because abandoned homes cost districts tax revenue.

By definition the lost that is suffered by the districts will have a spiraling effect throughout the community, taking funds from education and the economy.

I commend the Hon. ELIJAH CUMMINGS for introducing House Resolution 526, ''Supporting Ownership and Responsible Lending.'' I am a firm supporter for enforcing rules that would prevent persons from falling victim to unfair practices. By enforcing rules to eliminate unfair practices in sub-prime mortgage lending, addressing appraisal and other mortgage fraud, and increasing opportunities for loan counseling, we will raise the awareness of risky loans and protect present and future homeowners.

IRELAND POWER SHARING RESOLUTION

HON. SCOTT GARRETT

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 11, 2007

Mr. GARRETT of New Jersey. Madam Speaker, today, the House recognizes the historic achievement of a power-sharing government in Northern Ireland. After decades of violence, Protestants and Catholics have come together to form a government that fairly represents both sides.

With Ian Paisley as first minister and Martin McGuiness as deputy first minister, this government will be one which both sides can respect and entrust to work toward peaceful resolution of differences.

The joint government and a police force that is admired by both sides will bring an end to the years of ''troubles.'' Nearly 10 years ago when the Good Friday accord was signed it was still doubtful whether the two sides could come to a lasting agreement. Though there were setbacks along the way, the parties were committed to peace and at each opportunity for failure thy chose to lay aside their weapons and negotiate.

The people of Northern Ireland will have a bright future if they maintain the present course. Surely, there will be disagreements but there is now a legislative process to work out such differences.

The peace process in Northern Ireland is now a shining example of how peoples in conflict can put aside long-standing grievances and learn to live in peace. Today, we properly honor and offer our support to those who are working to establish a peaceful and unified government.

INTRODUCTION OF THE NATIVE AMERICAN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE FOR HOUSING ACT OF 2007

HON. STEVAN PEARCE

OF NEW MEXICO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 11, 2007

Mr. PEARCE. Madam Speaker, I rise today to introduce the ''Native American Economic

Development and Infrastructure for Housing Act of 2007." I am joined in this effort by my colleagues, Chairman BARNEY FRANK, Representatives DALE KILDEE, DAN BOREN, and RICK RENZI who I want to thank for their support.

This legislation will help Native Americans build stronger and better communities all across America. The demonstration project embodied in this bill will help Native Americans build not only improved neighborhoods, but the economic infrastructure to support those communities in some of the most rural and impoverished areas in America.

Currently, communities that receive direct funding from the Community Development Block Grant program may borrow or issue bonded debt for up to five times their annual CDBG allocation. This is known as the Section 108 loan guarantee program and encourages economic development, housing rehabilitation, public facilities and large-scale physical development projects.

Title VI of the Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Act, NAHASDA, is similar to the Section 108 statute and allows tribes to borrow or issue bonded debt for up to five times their annual NAHASDA allocation for housing purposes only. The Title VI program has been underutilized in part because the eligible projects are strictly limited to activities that do not generate sufficient income to pay back these loans.

We all know that economic development and infrastructure needs are acute in Indian Country. This legislation gives tribes the same access to vital economic and infrastructure resources that non-tribal communities currently use.

Under this program, an applicant would have to demonstrate to the Secretary that 70 percent of the benefit of the proposed project would go to "low-income Indian families on Indian reservations and other Indian areas." This is similar to the CDBG program, which requires that 70 percent of a project's benefit be for low- and moderate-income families, and ensures that proposed projects meet the need of the communities we all seek to support.

I urge my colleagues to join us in sponsoring this legislation so that we can support the efforts of local tribal communities as they work to improve their infrastructure and economies and to increase opportunities for Native American families.

IN REMEMBRANCE OF ROBERT E. SWEENEY

HON. DENNIS J. KUCINICH

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 11, 2007

Mr. KUCINICH. Madam Speaker, I rise today in remembrance of Congressman Robert E. Sweeney, whose tenacious pursuit of peace, justice and equality reached not only Cleveland and Northeast Ohio, but around the world.

As a Member of Congress, Robert supported the Voting Rights Act and fought to eliminate the social problems that plagued our country. As a county commissioner, he was instrumental in creating Cuyahoga County's public defender office, and helped to develop Playhouse Square into one of the largest entertainment districts in the Nation.

As a litigator, Robert fiercely defended the public health and safety, and ensured that all people were treated equally. He was one of the first lawyers in the Nation to uncover the asbestos problem. He also became an outspoken advocate for peace in Northern Ireland, and was responsible for pushing the issue into the national spotlight.

Madam Speaker and colleagues, please join me in remembering Congressman Robert E. Sweeney for his career in public service. Robert was a dear friend whose humor and personality touched thousands of lives. May his dedication to creating a more vibrant Northeast Ohio and a more peaceful world serve as an example to us all.

COMMENDING DAN FETTE

HON. MICHAEL C. BURGESS

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 11, 2007

Mr. BURGESS. Madam Speaker, I rise today to commend Mr. Dan Fette of Denton, Texas on starting Dan Fette Builders, Inc.

Mr. Fette graduated from Texas A&M with a BS in Building Construction and a MS in Construction Management. He worked in the construction industry for many years before starting his own company. He set out with the goal to build a few really great houses. He wanted to be able to focus all of his attention on one house so the customer would be exceptionally pleased.

Mr. Fette is currently the chairman of the Green Building Program of the Home Builders Association (HBA) of Greater Dallas and will soon become the president of the HBA Denton Division. The goal of the HBA's Green Building Program is to bring more energy efficient and environmentally friendly homes to the Metroplex. This local effort is being supported by the Green Building Initiative (GBI) and the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB), which will provide area builders with resources and technical support. Additionally, the Green Building Program will maintain a database of "green builders" and "green built" homes in the area for potential homebuyers.

In addition, Mr. Fette is a member of Green Built North Texas, a voluntary partnership of local home builders, industry supporters, and sponsors committed to creating awareness and interest in the construction of higher-performance, lower-impact residential homes in North Central Texas. Members of Green Built North Texas work to meet the highest standards in relation to site management, waste recycling, water efficiency, indoor air quality, energy efficiency, materials, and homeowner education.

In an age when energy conservation is at a critical point, I am honored to represent a man who is using his talents and skills in construction, to better our community. I extend my sincere congratulations to Mr. Dan Fette for starting his own company, Dan Fette Builders, Inc. I wish him success in the future.

IN RECOGNITION OF TOM AND PEGGY RICE

HON. JEFF MILLER

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 11, 2007

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Madam Speaker, on behalf of the United States Congress, it is an honor for me to rise today to recognize the Tom and Peggy Rice for being awarded the WFTW Humanitarian Award for 2007.

Radio station WFTW News Talk 1260, one of the oldest AM news and talk radio stations in Northwest Florida, has chosen Tom and Peggy Rice in recognition for their extraordinary contributions to countless local fund raising efforts.

Tom and Peggy own the Magnolia Grill, a restaurant in Fort Walton Beach, Florida. Located in a historic home built in 1910, the Magnolia Grill is revered as a local gem for its true southern charm, delicious cuisine, and local historic memorabilia.

Over the past several years, Tom and Peggy have worked tirelessly to help raise funds for numerous non-profit organizations throughout the community. On Saturday mornings, they host pancake breakfast fund raisers and donate all the food, beverages, supplies, and labor for the event.

The Humanitarian Award, an antique street corner clock, sits proudly on display in the lobby of the Magnolia Grill for restaurant patrons to see. On the face of the clock, is a plaque acknowledging Tom and Peggy for their involvement within the community.

As remarkable philanthropists, the Rice's generosity and commitment to service have helped to create a better life for the citizens of Northwest Florida and have made an impression that will last a lifetime.

Madam Speaker, on behalf of the United States Congress, I am proud to recognize Tom and Peggy Rice for their exemplary community service and wish them both continued success and happiness.

IN MEMORY OF RICH HERZOG

HON. DAVID G. REICHERT

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 11, 2007

Mr. REICHERT. Madam Speaker, I rise today as the former Sheriff of King Country, Washington, to pay tribute to one of my King County Sheriff's Office Deputies, Richard Herzog, who was senselessly killed in the line of duty five years ago this month in the City of Newcastle.

As a Sheriff's Deputy, Rich had an unwavering dedication to the community he served. He made the ultimate sacrifice on June 22, 2002, when his firearm was taken from him. He was shot while protecting the citizens around him. America lost a true hero that day and it is an honor to recognize him here today.

Until a few years ago, I was one of the 870,000 sworn law enforcement officers in this country. I am familiar with the struggles that law enforcement officers face each day—even after facing the most threatening circumstances and risking their lives, officers return to duty at the beginning of their next shift

to protect the citizens of their city, county, state and this country.

Deputy Herzog was kind and caring. He served his country not only as a law enforcement officer, but he was also a twenty-year veteran of the United States Army Special Forces.

Deputy Herzog was recently honored by the City of Newcastle at a dedication ceremony unveiling a new memorial in his honor.

The incredible loss of Rich to his wife, SunCha, and daughters, Sonja and Erika—their sacrifice—their husband and father—is still experienced every day and for the rest of their lives.

Madam Speaker, may we never forget the sacrifice the service of Deputy Rich Herzog and all of our fallen officers.

IN TRIBUTE TO ELIAS AND DOROTHY TYLER

HON. JASON ALTMIRE

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 11, 2007

Mr. ALTMIRE. Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Dorothy Tyler and her late husband Elias. Twenty years ago this July, they incorporated their organization, the Tyler Youth Group, Inc., which has provided years of programming and support to the children of Aliquippa, Pennsylvania. Their exemplary record of service to their community makes them deserving of high praise.

At the time the Tyler Youth Group, Inc. was founded in 1983, it consisted of a drill team, majorettes, pom pom girls and a drum corps. The Tylers saw the group as a way to serve an unmet need of area youths: the need for after-school programming that would provide kids with productive activities that would help them grow and develop. With a bus they purchased themselves, they took their group to activities and competitions across the region.

Time passed and as both the group and its participants grew, the Tylers added new programming and facilities to meet the needs of the children. They began offering educational and career-oriented activities, and in 1989 they took a rundown, dilapidated building and turned it into a community center for Aliquippa youths and their families. Today, the Aliquippa Tyler Community Youth Center provides a range of activities and services conducive to the healthy growth and development of the area's children.

I am honored to have the opportunity to recognize the Tylers for their tremendous record of service to their community. Their commitment to helping develop healthy, productive young citizens serves as an example to us all.

CELEBRATING THE LIFE OF G. GARY LETSON

HON. MICHAEL M. HONDA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 11, 2007

Mr. HONDA. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor the life of G. Gary Letson, who recently passed away in his Los Altos home on July 4, 2007. Gary dedicated his life to education and believed strongly in the power of teaching. His commitment to enriching science and math programs in our local schools has greatly raised the standard of education and inspired numerous students in our community.

G. Gary Letson was born on December 27, 1936 in San Diego, California to Neil Elizabeth Buck and Allen George Letson. He attended Hoover High School and then San Diego State University where he was a member of the Sigma Pi organization. As soon as he graduated, Gary began his teaching career and continued to serve his students and his community for the rest of his life.

Gary first taught high school science in the Grossmont School District in the San Diego area. He subsequently was named a Fulbright Scholar from 1964 to 1965 and traveled to Taegu University in South Korea, where he instructed biology teachers on more effective teaching methods. In 1967, he returned to the United States and settled in Santa Clara County, where he taught in numerous high schools over the next three decades.

During his 30 year tenure at the Fremont Union High School District, Gary taught mathematics and science at Sunnyvale High School, where he mentored me through my first formative teaching experience. Gary provided me with the firm foundation not only to teach the subject math, but to teach the whole child. That meant challenging the school administration on many occasions. I know today while we deal with policy his counsel still echoes in my mind saying, "Remember the whole child."

Gary went on to teach at Fremont High School and Monta Vista High School. His passion for his science and math was contagious as he motivated countless students with his innovative teaching methods and enthusiastic pedagogy. Gary treated all his students with the utmost respect and believed strongly in the potential of every young person who walked into his classroom. His sincere concern for his students was apparent in their interactions as he strived not just to teach the material but also to stimulate his students and to create a genuine interest in the subject matter he covered.

After retirement in 1996, Gary remained active in the Los Altos School District as a science aide at Almond Elementary School, a tutor at Mountain View High School and as a substitute teacher in the Mountain View and Los Altos High School Districts. Throughout his career, Gary was a strong proponent of outdoor science education programs and worked hard to introduce innovative curriculum to local high schools. His love for ecology and hands on learning reflected his focus on conservation and environmental awareness, a consciousness that he passed on to his students.

Besides his extensive work in the local school districts, Gary also faithfully served the community at large since the late 1960s through the Saint Thomas Episcopal Church in Sunnyvale. He played a major role in the Our Daily Bread program and also volunteered as a Vestry member and a Senior Warden. He actively assisted the Bible study and outreach programs and was a leader in overseeing church renovations. Gary diligently strove to become an "international Christian", ensuring that his every action was consistent with his beliefs. Furthermore, he was active in local community services including the League of Women Voters. After his retirement, he regularly volunteered as a poll worker in elections.

G. Gary Letson passed away on July 4, 2007 at the age of 70. He is survived by his loving wife of 39 years Jan Letson, his son and daughter-in-law Brian and Amy Letson, and his daughter Mary Letson. Gary left a legacy of excellence in teaching and touched the lives of numerous youth. Throughout his life, he believed strongly in the capacity of youth to make a positive impact on the community and thus devoted his life to guiding future generations on the path to success. We are forever grateful for his commitment to education in the math and science departments, and his contributions will continue to benefit our community long into the future.

COMMEMORATING ARIZONA NATIVE AMERICAN RIGHT TO VOTE DAY SATURDAY, JULY 14, 2007

HON. HARRY E. MITCHELL

OF ARIZONA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 11, 2007

Mr. MITCHELL. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor our Native American communities, twenty-two federally recognized Arizona tribal nations, representing more than 300,000 community members.

On June 2, 1924, the United States Congress passed the Indian Citizenship Act which guaranteed certain citizenship rights to Native Americans, however in Arizona that did not guarantee their right to vote.

Yet as early as 1863, before citizenship was granted, Pima and Maricopa warriors were serving in the United States Army protecting settlers in the Arizona territory.

Additionally, while Arizona Native Americans were not considered citizens of the United States before World War I, more than 8,000 Native Americans from Arizona served our country in the United States military during World War I.

In 1928, Peter Porter, a Pima from the Gila River Indian Community, courageously filed the initial lawsuit to challenge the denial of Native Americans' right to vote yet his efforts were denied by the Arizona Supreme Court. The Court argued that Native Americans were under federal guardianship.

In 1940 this distinguished body passed the Nationality Act of 1940, reaffirming citizenship of Native Americans, inspiring more than 25,000 Native Americans to serve in our country in the United States military. Yet, they were still being denied the right to vote in Arizona.

In 1947, two brave Yavapai men, Frank Harrison and Harry Austin, filed suit to overturn the 1928 Arizona Supreme Court decision which denied Native Americans the right to vote. The acts of these courage men, members of the Fort McDowell Yavapai Indian Community, a community I am honored to serve and represent in the United States Congress, won the landmark case. On July 15, 1948, the 1928 court ruling was overturned and Arizona's Native Americans confirmed their right to vote.

Sunday, July 15, 2007, is Arizona Native America Right to Vote Day. It is with a great deal of pride that I rise today to honor our Arizona Native American community on this very special day. It is also with great resolve that

I reaffirm my commitment to our Native people, honor their sovereignty and urge the United States Congress to honor all commitments conferred with our Native American Tribal Nations.

COMPARISON AND HISTORY TEACH US A LOT

HON. RALPH M. HALL

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 11, 2007

Mr. HALL of Texas. Madam Speaker, I submit for the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD a thoughtful comparison of U.S. military strategy in Vietnam and present-day military operations in Iraq written by Jerry Hogan, a retired Army Lieutenant Colonel who lives in Heath, TX, in the Fourth Congressional District. I urge my colleagues to review and reflect upon this as Congress faces critical decisions in the upcoming months on funding the war on terror.

COMPARISON AND HISTORY TEACH US A LOT

(By Jerry Hogan)

Sometimes it is important that we look at what we have done in the past to make sure we don't make the same mistakes again.

In 1950, believe it or not, the United States established a military assistance and advisory group in Vietnam to advise the French puppet government on strategy and train Vietnamese soldiers. This started America's longest war that did not end until April of 1975 with the infamous ''Fall of Saigon'' that we saw in our living rooms thanks to the modern miracle of television. For the almost three million of us who served in that war, those pictures on our TV sets burned holes through our heads as we saw first hand what we had done to a country and its people as we abandoned them without finishing the job we helped start.

Unfortunately there are many similarities between the U.S. involvement in Vietnam and our current involvement in Iraq. While we had advisors in Vietnam starting in 1950, our real combat role that saw the buildup of our forces go from 16,000 to 553,000, did not start until after the Gulf of Tonkin incident where, on August 2, 1964, one of our Naval ships was attacked by torpedo boats along North Vietnam's coast. Two days later, another ''attack'' occurred in about the same place against two more of our ships. These ''attacks'' led to retaliatory air strikes on our part and caused Congress to approve the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution which gave the president power to conduct military operations in Southeast Asia without declaring war. Later it was determined that the second ''attack'' was questionable which caused many people to say we entered this conflict under false pretenses. Sound anything like how we got into Iraq according to the opponents of that war?

The Vietnam War is viewed by many historians as a Cold War conflict between the United States, its allies, and the Republic of Vietnam on one side, and the Soviet Union, its allies, the People's Republic of China, and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam on the other. Many others, particularly the vocal opponents to the U.S. involvement in this war, viewed the conflict as a civil war between communist and non communist Vietnamese factions.

Today, the War in Iraq is viewed as a battleground between the US, its allies, and the Republic of Iraq versus the Islamist Jihadis and their allies, Syria and Iran, in the International War on Terrorism. Exchange the words ''communist and non communist'' with ''Sunni and Shiite'' and you hear the same arguments today about this war being just a civil war between two opposing religious factions in Iraq. Isn't it amazing how history seems to repeat itself with us Americans?

While actual U.S. combat operations did not start in Vietnam until 1964, U.S. forces assumed full responsibility for training the South Vietnamese Army in 1956 and President Kennedy increased our troop strength from 500 to over 16,000 when he took office. In his inaugural address, he made that famous pledge we know so well: ''the U.S. will pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe, in order to assure the survival and success of liberty.'' Remember what President Bush continues to say about our support for Afghanistan and Iraq as they held their elections and voted for a democratic form of government and how we would stand with them in their desire for a free and elected democracy? Sounds like two of our presidents so heavily involved with two separate unpopular wars had the same views!

During the Vietnam War, the U.S. had a Draft for supplying personnel needed in the military. President Johnson refused to mobilize the Reserve units during the war as he feared a political backlash. This led to larger draft call ups and the extension of some tours of duty. It also put a heavy strain on U.S. forces committed to other parts of the world. While the military today is an all-volunteer force, the same problems face the services today; tour extensions in Iraq for the Soldiers and Marines, equipment shortages, limited capabilities in other areas of the world, repeated tours of duty in Iraq and Afghanistan, and continued pressure on families of the service men and women. Again, you might think we learned from previous mistakes.

In January of 1968, the forces of North Vietnam launched the surprise ''Tet Offensive'' in hopes of sparking a national uprising. While the military objectives were not achieved, the U.S. public was shocked and confused over the war as General Westmoreland, the commander in Vietnam, had just predicted ''the end comes into view.'' The American media, which had been largely supportive of the administration, turned on President Johnson for what had become an increasing credibility gap. His approval ratings dropped from 48% to 36%; he declined to run for re-election; and the public's support for the war started a rapid decline. Any of this sound like something you may have heard recently?

In December, 1974, the Congress passed the Foreign Assistance Act of 1974, which cut off all military funding to the South Vietnamese government. The act went on to restrict the number of U.S. military personnel allowed in Vietnam to ''no more than 4000 within six months of enactment and 3000 within one year.'' By April of 1975 only four months after the cutoff of funds and the removal of essentially all U.S. forces, the Republic of Vietnam fell to the victors from the North.

During the Vietnam War, over 250,000 South Vietnamese military were killed and about 1.2 million were wounded. It is estimated that somewhere between two and five million Vietnamese civilians were killed. 58,000 Americans lost their life while 153,000 were wounded. In Iraq today, about 3,500 Americans have been killed and about 18,000 have been wounded. Close to 350 U.S. personnel have been killed in Afghanistan. Statistics on Iraqi and Afghanistan's military and civilian casualties are not available but estimates show they are high as well.

So what does this all mean today? Clearly there are two opposing views as to what should happen in Iraq. The President has been consistent in his view that we are fighting an International War on Terrorism and that freedom and democracy need help in the Middle East. Iraq is a fledgling democracy trying to establish itself after decades of dictatorship and after being made a main battleground by the worldwide Jihadist forces. Strong religious and political forces, both within and outside Iraq, are making the process of democracy very difficult. A military solution will not solve the problems in Iraq; it must be a political solution with a military component. Political will, as much as military might, is a decisive factor in this outcome.

The second view being expressed daily by some of our elected officials in Washington calls for a timetable for withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq. In my considered military view, this outlandish stupid course of action takes us right back to the days of Vietnam and is nothing more than a political proposal that leads us once again to watching the ''Fall of Saigon'' in our living rooms, but this time it will be the ''Fall of Baghdad.'' I really don't want to go through that again . . . and I hope you don't either. Let your elected officials know how you feel.

A SPECIAL TRIBUTE TO CAMPBELL SOUP ON THE OCCASION OF THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE NAPOLEON OHIO MANUFACTURING FACILITY

HON. PAUL E. GILLMOR

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 11, 2007

Mr. GILLMOR. Madam Speaker, it is my great pleasure to pay tribute to a special company in northwest Ohio. On July 17, 2007, the Campbell Soup Company will celebrate the 50th anniversary of the largest soup manufacturing facility in the world, located in the town of Napoleon, in the heart of northwest Ohio.

When Campbell's first came to Napoleon, the town of 5,500 was located just 16 miles from what was then the ''new'' Ohio turnpike alongside some of the most fertile farms in the United States. The combination of abundant resources, a strong transportation network and a terrific work force all helped bring Campbell's to value northwest Ohio.

Few would dispute that the growth of Napoleon to a city of more than 9,000 citizens is tied to the progress of the Campbell's facility. Only 50 years ago, the first cans of Chicken and Rice Soup came off the Napoleon assembly line. With the popularity of products such as canned spaghetti and V8 juice, today the Napoleon facility manufactures nearly 100 million individual products from almost 500 different varieties, ranging from Prego sauces to Swanson broth, and Campbell's full offering of beverage and soup items.

With 65 acres under roof, including more than 2 million square feet to manufacture Campbell's trademark soups, the Napoleon facility remains among Campbell's and the food processing industry's most modern and sophisticated facilities. In almost every year since 1957, Campbell's has invested in new technology at Napoleon that has helped to reach the heights of efficient, quality production that it is legendary for today, from vegetable sorting machines in 1960 to a new plastic bottle expansion in 2004.

Campbell's hasn't just been Napoleon's biggest employer, but also a terrific neighbor and friend to the community and all of northwest Ohio. It started in 1957 with a $100,000 contribution by Campbell's to expand the local hospital, the first of many such donations by Campbell's to improve the community over these past five decades.

Madam Speaker, the real success of Napoleon's Campbell Soup Facility comes not only from its products, but from its people. I have walked this plant, sat in the break room, greeted employees working the lines, and even had a V8 or two. I can tell you firsthand that what makes the Campbell's Soup plant in Napoleon special are its dedicated employees.

Madam Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in paying special tribute to the employees and the legacy of Campbell's Napoleon facility. Campbell's Napoleon facility has a rich and storied history of contributions made by thousands of Ohioans who have made their careers there. We're proud to have such a terrific company like Campbell's in northwest Ohio and look forward to many more years of success.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. MICHAEL R. TURNER

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 11, 2007

Mr. TURNER. Madam Speaker, on rollcall No. 609, on a motion to suspend the rules and adopt H. Res. 526—Supporting Home Ownership and Responsible Lending, I am recorded as a "no" vote. Having intended to vote "yes," I would like the RECORD to reflect my support for adoption of this resolution.

CELEBRATING THE 10-YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF THE UNITED STATES-ROMANIAN STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

HON. SOLOMON P. ORTIZ

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 11, 2007

Mr. ORTIZ. Madam Speaker, as co-chair of the Romanian Caucus, I rise today to celebrate the 10 year anniversary of the launch of the United States-Romanian strategic partnership.

In 1997 the United States and Romania established a strategic partnership resulting in close cooperation and consultations on all issues of common interest, particularly: NATO policies; promoting stability and security in Southeastern Europe, combating non-traditional threats; military and economic reforms in Romania and its region.

After ten years, we look back at the remarkable vision that inspired this unprecedented course in the development of the relations between the United States and Romania.

With utmost determination and U.S. support, Romania has since grown to what is today a trustworthy ally of the United States and one the most respectable and reliable contributors to global security. Romania is a member of NATO and of the European Union, an active player in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and a significant voice at the UN and in other international and regional organizations at the Black Sea and in Eastern and Southeastern Europe.

Romania has committed to a wide scale set of reforms internally, in its economic, social, justice and administrative sectors. Romania's achievements over the past ten years in its comprehensive internal reforms not only have prompted the country to NATO and EU membership, but serves as a great example of successful transformation to modernity and progress.

This transformation has yielded significant benefits mostly to the Romanian people but also to the Western community and to the transatlantic alliance. Next year in April, Romania will be the host of the NATO Summit, an event of critical importance to the alliance's shape and future. Romania has proved its capability to sustain long term commitments, along with its Western allies, in the fight against terrorism and organized crime.

At the same time, Romania has been an active promoter of tolerance and understanding among ethnic and religious communities. The recent OSCE high level conference on combating discrimination and other forms of intolerance, in Bucharest last June, has had a significant impact on maintaining the public commitment to respecting the most profound human values at the OSCE level. Romania also has taken meaningful steps towards assuming its own painful past through public education about, and remembrance of, the Holocaust.

We must all be proud of these accomplishments that were in large part inspired by the vision of a partnership laid out ten years ago. We also must affirm our duty to continue to build on this growing relation. It is this kind of partnership that continues to give us the power to overcome global challenges.

At this anniversary moment, we must acknowledge the indispensable contribution of the citizens of Romania, and of the Romanian American community to the successful development of our partnership. I congratulate the Romanian people and all its political leaders for their unwavering commitment to building such a strong mutual relation with the United States of America.

HONORING SKYLAND CAMP FOR GIRLS

HON. HEATH SHULER

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 11, 2007

Mr. SHULER. Madam Speaker, 90 years ago, the Skyland Camp for Girls was born with the auctioneer's call, "Sold to the lady in the apron." With $3,000, Susan Courtney Harris saved the hotel she loved in Clyde, North Carolina, and created a sanctuary for five generations of young women.

Four generations of the Harris family have kept the camp true to its purpose of building lifelong relationships founded in camaraderie and learning from one another. Mrs. Harris ran the camp until her daughters, Francis Brown and Helen Harris, took over and ran the camp until 1973 . Bunny Brown, bride of Mrs. Harris' grandson Timothy, owns the camp today, and it is run by her daughter Sherry.

I invite my colleagues to join me in celebrating the 90th anniversary of the Skyland Camp for Girls and the generations of vibrant young female leaders it has helped raise in North Carolina.

RECOGNIZING MATTHEW SCOTT

HON. RALPH M. HALL

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 11, 2007

Mr. HALL of Texas. Madam Speaker, I rise today to share an article written about a young man who serves as a member of the city council—guiding and planning for a city that the Dallas News pointed out last February to be in the county seat of the fastest growing county in the United States. I wish to place this article in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD to highlight the service of one unusually well-qualified young family man who finds time to also guide the destiny of my hometown of Rockwall, Texas, as it sheds its rural status and grows into the city of tomorrow. The article speaks for itself as set out in a recent issue of "Texas Super Lawyers 2007 Rising Stars Edition."

GREAT SCOTT

By Paul Sweeney

Why is Matthew Scott, a 39-year-old Dallas attorney, so often described as "a go-to guy"?

Just ask Greg Supan, a former law partner and colleague at the Dallas firm of Bell Nunnally & Martin. Not long ago, Supan got a last-minute, out-of-the-blue telephone call: An old fraternity brother from the University of Texas was relocating his oral surgery practice from Houston to Dallas. He urgently needed help in structuring an employment agreement between him and his new dentistry group.

Unfortunately, the attorney who assured Supan he could handle the assignment called back three days later and announced he was going on vacation. "He told me that I didn't tell him it was time-sensitive," Supan recalls, exasperation creeping into his voice.

So he turned to Scott, all 6 feet 6 inches of him. The former basketball player at the University of Iowa has, over the last decade, become an avid Texan—so much so that he won election to the city council in the bedroom community of Rockwall.

"At that point we had 24 hours to get the assignment done," Supan says, "and Matt, an expert in employment law, dropped everything to help out. He ended up doing a great job on what was actually a very complicated partnership. The client was thrilled." Supan adds: "When you're down by two, you pass the ball to him. He's a real buzzer-beater."

Amid the book-lined suite of offices at Bell Nunnally one hears similar stories, not just about Scott's dependability but also about his work ethic. Sherri Alexander, who heads the litigation section at the firm, says, "At our business-development meetings, where the partners get together to talk about work, and about which new clients have been contacted recently, Matt's always willing to participate." Praising his sense of timing, she adds, "Not too much—but not too little either."

"And when I have to go out of town on business," she says, "I can always trust him to deal directly with a client and handle things well in my absence."

The bottom line? "He has his own docket," she says, "plus the city council. But if somebody needs help, he always goes the extra mile."

The only son of a union printer and his Iowa farm wife, Scott grew up in Des Moines, where his childhood had its rough patches. He was bused to schools across town, an experience that put him in contact with a tough crowd. The experience helped teach him how to get along with people from different backgrounds, an ability that he inherited from his mother, who set an example of unpretentiousness.

Scott attributes his work ethic to his father, a veteran of World War II who saw plenty of action—and bloodshed—in the Pacific. He describes his father (both of his parents are deceased) as someone who insisted on order and neatness, took pride in his work, seldom missed a day on the job in 44 years and was always straight with people. ''Dad was the most honest person I've ever known,'' he says. ''And loyal, too.''

Those loyalties extended to his employer, his co-workers and his labor union. But there was never any question that his son would have a different kind of life. His father often lamented the fact that he had not taken advantage of the educational opportunities offered by the GI Bill, Scott says, ''and it was always very clear that I was going to college.''

He majored in psychology and played basketball as a walk-on shooting guard. He didn't get a lot of playing time; yet his coach, Tom Davis, hails him as an important asset to a team that sent several players to the NBA.

''I remember Matt Scott as a motivated and aggressive athlete, a good team player who fit in well,'' says Davis, now the head coach at Drake University in Des Moines—where Scott graduated from law school. ''And he was also coachable, someone who could accept criticism and was willing to make changes that would help the team.

''Maybe he was the 10th man on the team when we could only play five,'' the coach adds. ''But I recall what a good teammate Matt was. He was somebody people liked to be with, and practice with, and travel with—and he had a great work ethic.''

Some 40 minutes east of Dallas, such comments are echoed by colleagues in the chambers at the spanking-new city hall in Rockwall, seat of Rockwall County, the fastest-growing county in Texas. Scott, who describes himself as a staunch Republican, nonetheless works well with all members of the seven-person council, including dyed-in-the-wool Democrat Margo Nielsen.

''He's brash and he's smart and he's passionate about the issues,'' says Nielsen, ex-director of Rockwall County Helping Hands, a nonprofit social services agency. ''And as a lawyer'' she adds, ''he's trained to think holistically and broadly.''

Nielsen sings Scott's praises for his efforts to bring city services to Lake Rockwall Estates. Despite its impressive name, the ''estates'' is actually a dilapidated mobile-home park that had long been ignored by the city. But, thanks largely to Scott's efforts, Nielsen says, the city is in the process of annexing the unincorporated area and will soon provide, among other things, water and sewer services, trash pickup and improved roads.

''It's not the kind of issue that most city leaders look for,'' Nielsen says. ''There are no political rewards. But under Matt's leadership, it's getting done.''

Although he is still in his first term on the council, Scott has also won the confidence of Rockwall's mayor, Bill Cecil, a retired contract-director with the Department of Defense. ''He's my mayor pro tem,'' Cecil says, bragging about Scott the way the famous outlaw Butch Cassidy might say: ''That's my sidekick, 'The Sundance Kid.' ''

Together, Scott and Cecil share a keen interest in economic development, typified by $20 million in public spending that the city is lavishing on a new harbor at nearby Lake Ray Hubbard. Replete with fountains, pools, a waterfall and even a ''mini-riverwalk,'' the public-works project is luring private-sector financing for lakeside condominiums, retail stores and office space. On a tour of the Mediterranean-style construction that is under way, both men are buoyant. ''This will be a big economic engine for the city,'' says Scott.

In junior high school, Scott says, he visited Texas during a winter break and played tennis in shorts and a T-shirt while several inches of snow blanketed the ground back in Des Moines. He vowed that he would someday make balmy Texas his home—a pledge that he kept soon after he completed law school. Staying on a friend's sofa in Dallas, he studied for—and passed—the Lone Star State bar exam.

Newly married and with his ticket punched for practicing law, Scott and his wife pulled up stakes and set out for Texas. Arriving in Dallas, neither had a job lined up. ''We had two cars, the stuff in our apartment, and a couple of thousand dollars in wedding money,'' he says. ''That was it.''

After honeymooning in Cancun, the couple job-hunted in earnest. His wife found work as a legal secretary and Scott worked as a contract attorney. Ever the walk-on, he landed a job at Cooper, Aldous & Scully in the same way that he made the team at Iowa: by being aggressive.

He met one of the partners, Dallas lawyer Charla Aldous, during a deposition. ''I asked her if she was hiring,'' he recalls, ''and she said 'maybe' and I pulled out a résumé and then I got an interview.''

He got hired and moved to Bell Nunnally in June 1999.

At Bell Nunnally, Scott has been making a name for himself handling the full panoply of employment law, including discrimination, workers' compensation and sexual harassment cases. His expertise was ratified when District Judge Martin Feldman in Louisiana selected him to chair the U.S. 5th Circuit Court of Appeals' draft of the pattern jury charges for employment law. It took more than three years of effort getting the seven-member committee to find common ground.

His skill at being a team player came in handy there as well. One of his law partners, Thomas Case, lauds Scott for his ability to build bridges between the plaintiff and defense attorneys who were evenly represented—and divided—on the committee. ''The way he ran [the committee] was by trying to reach consensus,'' Case says. ''When they couldn't reach agreement, they put their differences in the footnotes'' (That makes it ''subject to further development by the district courts,'' Case adds.)

Case—who is 20 years Scott's senior and is something of a mentor to him—says that employment law cases are often ''emotionally charged.'' He says people become so attached to their jobs—and so identified by what they do—that ''trying employment cases is an awful lot like dealing with death or divorce.''

Although Texas is an ''employment at will'' state—which means that, in the absence of a contract or labor-union agreement, termination does not require cause—juries may nonetheless feel sympathy for a plaintiff who has lost his or her job. But one of Scott's strongest suits is that ''he has a good appreciation for what will or won't play with a jury,'' Case says. ''Jurors have all been employees, and it's likely that a few of them have had an adverse experience with an employer.''

One of the hardest parts of Scott's job can be convincing a client that what seems like an obvious argument for an employee's dismissal will not only leave a jury unmoved but could be inadmissible. Scott recalls a recent case in which the owner of an apartment complex fired a maintenance worker who was not only doing sub-par work but had a criminal record.

But the, employer was miffed when she learned that Scott was not willing to introduce the ex-employee's criminal record. ''She was British and frustrated that someone could file a lawsuit against her but she couldn't bring up the person's criminal record,'' Scott. says. ''She wasn't familiar with the U.S. judicial system.''

Despite his best efforts at negotiating a compromise, Scott says that he had to remove himself from the case. ''The sticking point was what I told her I would—and wouldn't—do,'' he says. ''She thought we could use [the plaintiff's criminal record] to make the lawsuit just go away,'' he adds. ''Smaller clients get frustrated and don't understand that the process takes time.''

In a state known for its flamboyant trial attorneys, Scott's colleagues cite his straightforwardness and plain speaking as a key asset in the courtroom. ''He does a good job at presenting his position and of being himself,'' Case says. ''Young lawyers don't realize that what works best is just being who they are. Juries appreciate someone like Matt who comes across as solid and sincere and prepared. Juries have a knack at seeing through an act.''

Now the father of three young children, Scott has ambitions for higher office when he is finally term-limited after six years on the Rockwall City Council. ''Anyone who runs for public office and says he doesn't have higher political ambitions is a liar,'' he says. ''Sure, I have higher political ambitions. I already ran for the state House [in Iowa] when I was in law school.

''So, yes, I'd like to hold other offices. But the Texas Legislature is out because it is a part-time job that would destroy my full-time job. So I'd have to look at something that either allowed me to continue practicing law, as the city council does, or something that would be a fulltime, paying job that replaces my legal pracrlce.

''So right now I have no idea what my ambitions are,'' he says. ''But, yes, I do have them.''

TRIBUTE TO CREDIT UNION AND COMMUNITY LEADER RALPH GOODWIN

HON. GREG WALDEN

OF OREGON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 11, 2007

Mr. WALDEN of Oregon. Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to an outstanding American and Oregonian, Mr. Ralph Goodwin, and to draw my colleagues' attention to the tremendous contributions Ralph has made to his industry and community.

Madam Speaker, this weekend I will have the honor of attending in picturesque John Day, Oregon the community celebration to commemorate Ralph Goodwin's retirement and the good he has done for his state and community.

On July 13, 2007, after 28 years of highly successful credit union leadership, Ralph will formally relinquish the reigns as CEO and president of the Old West Federal Credit Union. When Ralph assumed the top post in 1979 with what was then called the Grant

County Federal Credit Union, membership numbered 800 and assets were $2.5 million. As Ralph enters retirement, he leaves the Old West Federal Credit Union in excellent shape with over 7,500 members in four branch offices serving eight counties in eastern Oregon and assets of over $80 million. The positive growth under Ralph's leadership is remarkable, and a testament to how Ralph has always conducted business.

A true believer and advocate in the credit union movement, Ralph Goodwin's contribution to the communities of eastern Oregon and credit union philosophy is second to none. Through the World Council of Credit Unions, Ralph has participated in and been an indispensable part of efforts to bring credit unions and credit union philosophy to underdeveloped countries in the world, traveling to the Philippines and Uzbekistan to further this goal. Ralph's many years of civic leadership and steadfast commitment to the rural communities he has served has made a rewarding impact on many credit union members and employees that have benefited from his financial guidance and leadership example.

Throughout the credit union movement in Oregon and nationally, Ralph Goodwin is recognized as a leader and visionary whose passion and commitment to the credit union motto of people helping people is a core attitude of how credit union business is conducted. The high regard Ralph's colleagues have for him is exemplified by the service he has delivered and acknowledgment he has received on the state and national level, including being chosen as the Advocate of the Year by the Credit Union Association of Oregon as well as receiving the association's Distinguished Service Award, the highest honor bestowed upon an individual. Ralph is also well known and respected by many members on both sides of the political aisle in the Oregon Legislature and United States Congress as they can always rely on solid and straightforward information from him regarding credit union policy.

I ask my colleagues to join me in paying tribute to Ralph Goodwin, and delivering our thanks for the tremendous good he has fostered in the credit union movement and throughout Oregon. Ralph can now finally take a break with his lovely wife, Toni, and their seven children and 15 grandchildren.

Thank you for all that you've done, Ralph. I'm very proud to count you and Toni as my good friends, and wish you both the best over many happy years to come.

HONORING JONATHAN MICHAEL ROSSI

HON. GUS M. BILIRAKIS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 11, 2007

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor PFC Jonathan Michael Rossi, who was killed on July 1, 2007, in Baghdad, Iraq, in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Jonathan was part of the B Company, 2nd Battalion, 12th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division stationed in Fort Bliss, Texas, and was killed when his patrol encountered an insurgent attack involving an improvised explosive device and small-arms fire.

I did not have the privilege of knowing Private Rossi personally, but by all accounts he was a courageous young man who was devoted to serving his country and family. Jonathan grew up in Safety Harbor, Florida. Following his longtime dream and strong sense of duty to country, he joined the Army only two months after graduating from Countryside High School in 2005.

Jonathan was reserved young man who had spent much of his youth with the goal of service his country. Having lost his mother at a young age to cancer, he demonstrated a sense of courage and strength, which he brought to the battlefield.

During his short time as an Army infantryman, Jonathan earned a great deal of recognition for his service. Among his many awards and honors are a Bronze Star Medal, Purple Heart, Combat Infantrymen Badge, Parachutist Badge, Army Good Conduct Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Iraq Campaign Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Army Service Ribbon and the Overseas Service Ribbon.

Madam Speaker, my heart aches for Jonathan's family. He leaves behind his father, Michael, who also faithfully served his country for 20 years, and seven siblings and step-siblings. May God bless the Rossi family and continue to watch over the country that Private Rossi so loved. We shall never forget him.

ON THE 12TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE SREBRENICA GENOCIDE

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 11, 2007

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Madam Speaker, this week the world paused to remember and reflect on the horrific acts of brutality, wanton cruelty and mass murder committed in Srebrenica a mere 12 years ago.

On Sunday, I joined a distinguished group of leaders and survivors to honor those brave Bosniaks who suffered and died—victims of the genocide.

Among those who led the solemn ceremony was Dr. Mustafa Ceric, the Reis-ul-Ulema, President of the Council of Ulema in Bosnia. Reis Ceric is an inspiring man of God and internationally recognized as a man of peace and extraordinary compassion—and a friend.

Also there was President Haris Silajdzic, a Bosnian leader I have known and deeply respected since the early 90s. Dr. Silajdzic, throughout the darkness and moral confusion of the Balkan war was a powerful, persistent, reasonable and dynamic voice for peace, human rights, the rule of law and accountability for genocide.

In my remarks, I tried to convey to our Bosnian friends that Americans and others of goodwill throughout the world again extend their deepest condolences and respect to the mothers and surviving family members who have endured unspeakable sorrow and loss that time will never abate. I assured the survivors of our earnest prayers.

Madam Speaker, the international community must recommit itself to apprehending and bringing to justice once and for all those who perpetrated these heinous crimes, including Mladić and Karadzić.

Justice is the essential prerequisite to sustainable reconciliation. No matter how long it takes, we must never tire or grow weary in the pursuit of justice. Renewal and a further consolidation of democracy must be rooted in systemic reform, including police reform. Perhaps some of the lessons learned from successful initiatives in Northern Ireland might have application there.

Looking back, it is almost beyond comprehension that the Srebrenica genocide occurred at all.

Future historians, Madam Speaker, will be hard pressed to ever understand how a UN Security Council designated "safe area," guarded by a significant deployment of UN peacekeepers, backed up by NATO's superior air power, could have capitulated in the face of unmitigated evil and enabled one of the most despicable acts in human history.

After Bosnian Serb forces attacked elements of UNPROFOR beginning in early July 1995, a series of gross miscalculations, mistakes and betrayal quickly led to the systematic slaughter of over 8,000 Bosniaks, mostly men.

Adding unnecessary insult to injury some in the international community further exacerbated matters by employing euphemisms that masked the reality of the genocide. Somehow, they just couldn't utter the word genocide.

Nevertheless, the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia found "beyond any reasonable doubt that a crime of genocide was committed in Srebrenica." More recently, the verdict of the International Court of Justice that genocide occurred in Srebrenica begs the question: What are the consequences?

Two years ago, I authored a resolution that overwhelmingly passed the U.S. Congress that clearly and unambiguously condemned the Srebrenica genocide and stated in part that "all persons indicted by the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) should be apprehended and transferred to The Hague without further delay, and all countries should meet their obligations to cooperate fully with the ICTY at all times . . ."

Madam Speaker, the genocideurs would like nothing better than that we forget. And that, of course, is something we cannot do. Ever.

LINKS BETWEEN OIL, POVERTY, AND CORRUPTION ON CONTINENT OF AFRICA

HON. DIANE E. WATSON

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 11, 2007

Ms. WATSON. Madam Speaker, I rise today to address the links between oil, poverty, and corruption that plague too many people on the continent of Africa.

Kensington International is a United States-based firm that is owed money by the Government of the Republic of Congo. In an effort to collect on its debts, Kensington took the Government of the Republic of Congo to Court in Hong Kong. The Government of Congo, based in Brazzaville, had claimed that, because of the poverty of their nation, that they were unable to pay their debts.

I would encourage my colleagues to examine the documents produced as evidence in this court case. They are available on the Internet at www.globalwitness.org, under the heading, "Congo: Is President's son paying for

designer shopping sprees with country's oil money?''

The documents online include:

1. Bill for credit card spending by Mr Christel (son of President, head of Cotrade) on luxury items and other apparently personal expenses.

2. Bank letter indicating that Long Beach Ltd is paying credit card bills for Mr Christel.

3. Corporate record identifying Mr Christel as the owner of Long Beach.

4. Credit card bill for Blaise Elenga, counsel to Cotrade, also indicating apparently personal expenses.

5. Bank letter indicating that E Investments Ltd is paying credit card bills for Mr Elenga.

6. Corporate record identifying Mr Elenga as the owner of E. Investments, formerly known as Elenga Investments.

7. Document indicates business relationship between Long Beach, Elenga Investments and Sphynx Bermuda, the latter a company controlled by Denis Gokana, found by the London High Court in November 2005 to be involved in selling state oil through shell companies, a facade intended to deceive Congo's creditors, from which he personally profited and at considerable cost to the Congolese Treasury.

8. Documents indicating payments to Long Beach and Elenga Investments by Pan Africa, a company involved in oil-related transactions with the Congolese state oil company.

9. Bank documents indicating payments to Elenga Investments by Africa Oil and Gas Corporation (AOGC), which was described by the London court in 2005 as a ''sham company'' involved in ''sham transactions'', the profits of which ended up in AOGC.

10. Bank documents indicating payments to Long Beach from AOGC.

11. Documents indicating that Long Beach received payments related to sales of Congolese oil by the state oil company.

These documents are important because they raise serious questions about what appears to be personal financial transactions to the benefit of public officials with funds that may derive from state oil sales. This comes at time when 70 percent of Congolese citizens earn less than a dollar a day. Because commitments to prevent conflicts of interest in the oil sector are a key condition for Congo to receive full debt relief, I am concerned that these documents show a blatant failure to comply with the commitments they made as part of the Highly Indebted Poor Countries Initiative, also know as ''HIPC''. The Republic of Congo committed to the United States, and the international community, in March 2006, that, in return for progressing towards full HIPC debt relief, that it will carry out reforms of the oil sector including ''preventing conflicts of interest in the marketing of oil [and] requiring officials of SNPC [the state oil company] to publicly declare and divest any interests in companies having a business relationship with SNPC.'' The context of this commitment is strong U.S. Congressional and international concern about corruption in the oil sector in Congo. One of the conditions of the HIPC program is the completion of a diagnostic study on SNPC's marketing of oil by independent auditors, which is not yet completed. The U.S. supports the strengthening of the HIPC triggers in relation to oil sector transparency and anti-corruption measures. These concerns are particularly acute given the Congo's reputation for serious corruption.

Madam Speaker, too many African governments are unable to serve their people because of the crushing burden of international debt. Debt relief for Africa needs to be a top priority for the United States, in order to enable these governments to serve their people. But we owe it to the people of Africa to do debt relief right. We need to make sure that we are not rewarding governments that are not serving as good stewards of their citizens' national wealth. I urge my colleagues to join me in pressing forward to relieve current African debt while simultaneously working to prevent the debt cycle from starting all over again.

SUPPORTING HOME OWNERSHIP AND RESPONSIBLE LENDING

SPEECH OF

HON. SHEILA JACKSON-LEE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 10, 2007

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in proud support of H. Res. 526, as offered by my distinguished colleague from Maryland and fellow member of the U.S. House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, Congressman ELIJAH CUMMINGS. This resolution seeks to recognize and support home ownership and responsible lending.

Ownership of property is an exciting prospect, especially when individuals acquire property that they can truly call ''their'' own. As once stated in Essence magazine, ''ownership gives a sense of power and permanence; you are the ruler of your castle and not the pawn of a landlord.'' For many Americans, home ownership is an important attribute to realizing the American dream. Whether it means buying a home for the first time or refinancing, home ownership is a powerful economic stimulus, both for the individual homeowners, as well as the national economy. It benefits neighborhoods by raising property values and providing economic and social capital in previously distressed communities.

Mr. Speaker, our Nation recently experienced a housing boom from 2001 to 2006, due to historically low mortgage rates, rising home prices, and increased liquidity in the secondary mortgage market—factors that led to the growth of the sub-prime mortgage industry. In the year 2006 alone, more than 75,000,000 Americans owned homes, and the home ownership rate reached a near record high of nearly 69 percent. For non-Hispanic whites in 2006, the home ownership rate was 76 percent, while the rate for African Americans fell at only 48.2 percent. Hispanic home ownership rate was at 49.5 percent, and that of Asians, Native Americans, and Pacific Islanders were at 60 percent.

The buying of a home is usually the largest purchase that most people will ever make in their lifetime. To many individuals, this is known as a ''huge responsibility with great benefits.'' Sub-prime market has created home ownership opportunities for lower-income people, families without access to down payments and people with little or no credit histories. On the other hand, it has also created opportunities for ''predatory'' lending, where unscrupulous lenders hide the true cost of sub-prime loans from unsophisticated borrowers.

Higher cost sub-prime mortgage loans are most prevalent in lower income neighborhoods with high concentration of minorities. This is simply unacceptable. In the past few months, it has become increasingly clear to the American people that irresponsible sub-prime lending practices have contributed to a wave of foreclosures, which are in essence, harming our communities and disrupting housing markets. In 2005, 53 percent of African Americans and 37.8 percent of Hispanics took out sub-prime loans.

Home ownership is critical in building wealth because it signifies the accumulation of appreciable assets. It has been proven consistently that property usually constitutes one's greatest financial asset because ownership of property is one of the single largest investments that an individual can make. On the other hand, foreclosures can be detrimental to an individual, legally and administratively. The average foreclosure causes lenders to loose thousands of dollars and costs the borrower an average $7,200 in administrative charges. For the local government, abandoned homes cost districts tax revenues.

As a public servant and a representative of the people, I strongly urge my colleagues to vote in favor of H. Res. 526. The time has come for us to raise awareness about the dangers of risky loans and to protect homeowners from unscrupulous lending practices from mortgage brokers and lenders. We must demand the enforcement of rules eliminating unfair and deceptive practices in sub-prime mortgage lending, as well as the establishment of clear minimum standards for mortgage originators. Among many things, H. Res. 526 would help in the reduction and elimination of abuses in prepayment penalties, as well as increase opportunities for loan counseling.

Knowledge is the remedy for fear, however knowledge is not enough. We must apply that knowledge to achieve change.

Daily Digest

Senate

Chamber Action

Routine Proceedings, pages S9069–S9187

Measures Introduced: Fourteen bills and two resolutions were introduced, as follows: S. 1772–1785, and S. Res. 269–270. **Page S9135**

Measures Considered:

National Defense Authorization Act: Senate continued consideration of H.R. 1585, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel, taking action on the following amendments proposed thereto: **Pages S9076–S9124**

Adopted:

Levin (for Durbin) Amendment No. 2131 (to Amendment No. 2019), to require the Secretary of Defense to develop a comprehensive plan for the provision to members of the Armed Forces with traumatic brain injury or post-traumatic stress disorder the services that best meet their individual needs. **Page S9102**

Levin (for Graham) Amendment No. 2154 (to Amendment No. 2011), to improve the distribution of benefits under Traumatic Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance. **Page S9103**

Levin (for Craig/Akaka) Amendment No. 2115 (to Amendment No. 2019), to require the Secretary of Defense to ensure that the Center of Excellence in Prevention, Diagnosis, Mitigation, Treatment, and Rehabilitation of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder collaborates to the maximum extent practicable with the National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder of the Department of Veterans Affairs, institutions of higher education, and other appropriate public and private entities. **Page S9103**

Levin (for Craig/Akaka) Amendment No. 2114 (to Amendment No. 2019), to require the Secretary of Defense to ensure that the Center of Excellence in Prevention, Diagnosis, Mitigation, Treatment, and Rehabilitation of Traumatic Brain Injury collaborates to the maximum extent practicable with the Department of Veterans Affairs, institutions of higher education, and other appropriate public and private entities. **Page S9103**

Levin (for Lieberman) Amendment No. 2089 (to Amendment No. 2019), to require the development of a program on comprehensive pain management in the Center of Excellence in the Prevention, Diagnosis, Mitigation, Treatment, and Rehabilitation of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. **Page S9103**

Levin (for Lieberman) Amendment No. 2090 (to Amendment No. 2019), to require the development of a program on comprehensive pain management in the Center of Excellence in the Prevention, Diagnosis, Mitigation, Treatment, and Rehabilitation of Traumatic Brain Injury. **Pages S9103–04**

Levin (for Snowe) Amendment No. 2162 (to Amendment No. 2019), to prohibit upon appeal a reduction in disability rating once such rating has been assigned by an informal physical evaluation board of the Department of Defense. **Page S9104**

By 90 yeas to 5 nays (Vote No. 245), Sessions Modified Amendment No. 2024 (to Amendment No. 2011), to state the policy of the United States on the protection of the United States and its allies against Iranian ballistic missiles. **Pages S9076–79, S9112–13**

Levin (for Akaka) Amendment No. 2132, to provide and enhance rehabilitative treatment and services to veterans with traumatic brain injury and to improve health care and benefits programs for veterans. **Page S9115**

Levin (for Nelson (NE)/Graham) Modified Amendment No. 2160 (to Amendment No. 2019), to provide extended benefits under the TRICARE program for the primary caregivers of members of the uniformed services who incur a serious injury or illness on active duty. **Page S9115**

Levin (for Nelson (NE)/Graham) Modified Amendment No. 2159 (to Amendment No. 2019), to provide for the reimbursement of certain former members of the uniformed services with service-connected disabilities for follow-on specialty care and related services. **Page S9115**

By a unanimous vote of 94 yeas (Vote No. 246), Levin Amendment No. 2019 (to Amendment No.

2011), to provide for the care and management of wounded warriors, as amended.

Pages S9086–S9102, S9107–24

Sununu Amendment No. 2184 (to Amendment No. 2135), of a perfecting nature.

Pages S9113–16, S9919–24

Pending:

Nelson (NE) (for Levin) Amendment No. 2011, in the nature of a substitute. **Page S9076–S9124**

Nelson (FL) Amendment No. 2013 (to Amendment No. 2012), to change the enactment date.

Page S9076

Levin Amendment No. 2087 (to Amendment No. 2011), to provide for a reduction and transition of United States forces in Iraq. **Pages S9076, S9079**

Reed Amendment No. 2088 (to Amendment No. 2087), to change the enactment date. **Page S9076**

Cornyn Amendment No. 2100 (to Amendment No. 2011), to express the sense of the Senate that it is in the national security interest of the United States that Iraq not become a failed state and a safe haven for terrorists. **Pages S9116–19**

Dorgan/Conrad Amendment No. 2135, relative to bringing Osama bin Laden and other leaders of al-Qaeda to justice. **Pages S9117–19**

A unanimous-consent-time agreement was reached providing for further consideration of the bill at approximately 9 a.m. on Friday, July 13, 2007; that the time until 9:30 a.m. be for debate on Dorgan/Conrad Amendment No. 2135 (listed above), as amended, and that Senator Dorgan and Senator Sununu each control 10 minutes; provided further, Senate vote on or in relation to Dorgan/Conrad Amendment No. 2135 at approximately 9:30 a.m.

Page S9186

Appointments:

National Council on the Arts: The Chair, on behalf of the Majority Leader, pursuant to Public Law 105–83, announced the appointment of the following individual to serve as a member of the National Council on the Arts: Senator Whitehouse.

British-American Interparliamentary Group: The Chair, on behalf of the President pro tempore, and upon the recommendation of the Majority Leader, pursuant to 22 U.S.C. 2761, as amended, appointed the following Senator as a delegate of the Senate delegation to the British-American Interparliamentary Group conference during the 110th Congress: Senator Sanders.

British-American Interparliamentary Group: The Chair, on behalf of the President pro tempore, and upon the recommendation of the Republican Leader, pursuant to 22 U.S.C. 2761, as amended, appointed the following Senators as delegates to the British-American Interparliamentary Group conference during the 110th Congress: Senators Grassley, Shelby, and Gregg.

Vietnam Education Foundation: The Chair, on behalf of the President pro tempore, and upon the recommendation of the Majority Leader, pursuant to Public Law 106–554, appointed Senator Webb to the Board of Directors of the Vietnam Education Foundation.

Senate National Security Working Group: The Chair announced, on behalf of the Republican Leader, pursuant to the provisions of S. Res. 105 (adopted April 13, 1989), as amended by S. Res. 149 (adopted October 5, 1993), as amended by the Public Law 105–275, further amended by S. Res. 75 (adopted March 25, 1999), as amended by S. Res. 383 (adopted October 27, 2000), and amended by S. Res. 355 (adopted November 13, 2002), and further amended by S. Res. 480 (adopted November 20, 2004), the appointment of the following Senator to serve as a member of the Senate National Security Working Group for the 110th Congress: Senator Coleman. **Page S9186**

Message from the President: Senate received the following message from the President of the United States:

Transmitting, pursuant to law, the initial assessment report relative to the Iraqi benchmarks; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations. (PM–20) **Page S9129**

Removal of Injunction of Secrecy: The injunction of secrecy was removed from the following treaty:

International Convention for Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism (Treaty Doc. No. 110–4).

The treaty was transmitted to the Senate today, considered as having been read for the first time, and referred, with accompanying papers, to the Committee on Foreign Relations and ordered to be printed. **Pages S9185–96**

Nominations Received: Senate received the following nominations:

Thomas P. O'Brien, of California, to be United States Attorney for the Central District of California for the term of four years.

Edward Meacham Yarbrough, of Tennessee, to be United States Attorney for the Middle District of Tennessee for the term of four years vice James K. Vines, resigned.

Routine lists in the Air Force, Army, Navy.

Pages S9186–87

Executive Communications: **Page S9129**

Petitions and Memorials: **Pages S9129–25**

Additional Cosponsors: **Pages S9135–38**

Statements on Introduced Bills/Resolutions: Pages S9138–54

Additional Statements: Pages S9127–28

Amendments Submitted: Pages S9154–84

Notices of Hearings/Meetings: Page S9184

Authorities for Committees to Meet: Pages S9184–85

Privileges of the Floor: Page S9185

Record Votes: Two record votes were taken today. (Total—246) Pages S9112–13, S9116

Adjournment: Senate convened at 9:30 a.m. and adjourned at 7:06 p.m., until 9 a.m. on Friday, July 13, 2007. (For Senate's program, see the remarks of the Acting Majority Leader in today's Record on page S9186.)

Committee Meetings

(Committees not listed did not meet)

BUSINESS MEETING:

Committee on Appropriations: Committee ordered favorably reported the following:

An original bill making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation and Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies, for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2008; and

H.R. 2829, making appropriations for financial services and general government for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2008, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute.

CROSS-BORDER EXCHANGE MERGERS

Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs: Subcommittee on Securities, Insurance and Investment concluded a hearing to examine cross-border exchange mergers, focusing on the global view, after receiving testimony from Erik Sirri, Director, Division of Market Regulation, and Ethiopis Tafara, Director, Office of International Affairs, both of the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission; Noreen Culhane, New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) Group, and Adena Friedman, National Association of Securities Dealers Automated Quotations (NASDAQ) Stock Market, Inc., both of New York, New York; Allen Ferrell, Harvard Law School, Cambridge, Massachusetts; and Damon A. Silvers, AFL–CIO, Washington, D.C.

TELEPHONE NUMBER PORTABILITY

Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation: Committee concluded a hearing to examine telephone number portability, including S. 1769, to amend the Communications Act of 1934 to facilitate number portability in order to increase consumer choice of voice service provider, after receiving testimony from Tony Clark, North Dakota Public Service Commission, Bismarck, on behalf of the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners; Ted Schremp, Charter Communications, Inc., St. Louis, Missouri; Jonathan Banks, United States Telecom Association, and Christopher Guttman-McCabe, CTIA–The Wireless Association, both of Washington, D.C.

NOMINATIONS

Committee on Energy and Natural Resources: Committee concluded a hearing to examine the nominations of Clarence H. Albright, of South Carolina, to be Under Secretary, who was introduced by Senator DeMint, and Lisa E. Epifani, of Texas, to be Assistant Secretary for Congressional and Intergovernmental Affairs, both of the Department of Energy, and James L. Caswell, of Idaho, to be Director of the Bureau of Land Management, who was introduced by Senators Craig and Crapo, and Brent T. Wahlquist, of Pennsylvania, to be Director of the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement, both of the Department of the Interior, after the nominees testified and answered questions in their own behalf.

LAND BILLS

Committee on Energy and Natural Resources: Subcommittee on National Parks concluded a hearing to examine S. 488 and H.R. 1100, bills to revise the boundary of the Carl Sandburg Home National Historic Site in the State of North Carolina, S. 617, to make the National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Pass available at a discount to certain veterans, S. 824 and H.R. 995, bills to amend Public Law 106–348 to extend the authorization for establishing a memorial in the District of Columbia or its environs to honor veterans who became disabled while serving in the Armed Forces of the United States, S. 955, to establish the Abraham Lincoln National Heritage Area, S. 1148, to establish the Champlain Quadricentennial Commemoration Commission and the Hudson-Fulton 400th Commemoration Commission, S. 1380, to designate as wilderness certain land within the Rocky Mountain National Park and to adjust the boundaries of the Indian Peaks Wilderness and the Arapaho National Recreation Area of the Arapaho National Forest in the State of Colorado, and S. 1182, to amend the Quinebaug and Shetucket Rivers Valley National Heritage Corridor Act of 1994 to increase the authorization of appropriations and modify the date on which the authority of the Secretary of the Interior terminates under the Act, and S. 1728, to amend the National Parks and Recreation Act of 1978 to reauthorize the Na Hoa Pili O Kaloko-Honokohau Advisory Commission,

after receiving testimony from Senators Allard, Dole, and Thune; Representatives Mark Udall and Musgrave; Katherine H. Stevenson, Acting Assistant Director, Business Services, National Park Service, Department of the Interior; Mayor Judy Burke, Grand Lake, Colorado; Dennis Harmon, Water Supply and Storage Company, Fort Collins, Colorado; Dean Stoline, American Legion, Washington, D.C.; Heather Baker-Sullivan, Hudson Fulton Champlain Quadricentennial Commission, Katonah, New York; Tom Martin, Looking for Lincoln Heritage Coalition, Mt. Pulaski, Illinois; and Charlene Perkins Cutler, Quinebaug-Shetucket Heritage Corridor, Inc., Putnam, Connecticut.

AVIATION FINANCING

Committee on Finance: Committee concluded a hearing to examine the Airport Airways Trust Fund, focusing on the future of aviation financing, the extent to which the current funding structure can support the Federal Aviation Administration's activities, including the Next Generation Air Transportation System (NextGen), and issues that could affect the overall cost of NextGen, the implications of selected provisions of proposals to fund aviation activities, after receiving testimony from Marion C. Blakey, Administrator, Federal Aviation Administration; Peter R. Orszag, Director, Congressional Budget Office; Gerald L. Dillingham, Director, Physical Infrastructure Issues, Government Accountability Office; and Mark M. Hansen, University of California Institute of Transportation Studies, Berkeley.

DIRTY BOMB VULNERABILITIES (PART 1)

Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs: Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations concluded a hearing to examine certain vulnerabilities in the government's procedures for licensing radiological materials, focusing on the effectiveness of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's materials licensing policies and procedures, and the vulnerability of those licenses to counterfeiting, after receiving testimony from Gene Aloise, Director, Natural Resources and Environment, and Gregory D. Kutz, Managing Director, and John W. Cooney, Assistant Director, both of Forensic Audits and Special Investigations, all of the Government Accountability Office; and Edward McGaffigan, Jr., Commissioner, United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

PRIVATE SECTOR PREPAREDNESS

Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs: Ad Hoc Subcommittee on State, Local, and Private Sector Preparedness and Integration concluded hearings to examine the state of public-private collaboration in preparing for and responding to national catastrophes, after receiving testimony from Colonel Robert B. Stephan, Assistant Secretary of Homeland Security for the Office of Infrastructure Protection; Eileen R. Larence, Director, Homeland Security and Justice Issues, Government Accountability Office; and Kenneth C. Watson, Cisco Systems, Inc., San Jose, California, on behalf of the Partnership for Critical Infrastructure Security.

NOMINATION

Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions: Committee concluded a hearing to examine the nomination of James W. Holsinger, Jr., of Kentucky, to be Medical Director in the Regular Corps of the Public Health Service, subject to qualifications therefor as provided by law and regulations, and to be Surgeon General of the Public Health Service, Department of Health and Human Services, after the nominee, who was introduced by Senators Bunning and McConnell, testified and answered questions in his own behalf.

TRANSPORTATION ISSUES IN INDIAN COUNTRY

Committee on Indian Affairs: Committee concluded an oversight hearing to examine transportation issues in Indian country, after receiving testimony from Jerry Gidner, Deputy Bureau Director, Office of Indian Services, Department of the Interior; John R. Baxter, Associate Administrator for Federal Lands, Federal Highway Administration, Department of Transportation; Don Kashevaroff, Seldovia Village Tribe, Seldovia, Alaska; Pete Red Tomahawk, Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Ft. Yates, North Dakota; Erin S. Forrest, Hualapai Tribe, Peach Springs, Arizona; and James Garrigan, Red Lake Band of Chippewa Indians, Red Lake, Minnesota.

BUSINESS MEETING

Committee on the Judiciary: Committee began consideration of S. 1145, to amend title 35, United States Code, to provide for patent reform, but did not complete action thereon, and recessed subject to the call of the Chair.

House of Representatives

Chamber Action

Public Bills and Resolutions Introduced: 34 public bills, H.R. 3009–3042; and 8 resolutions, H. Con. Res. 182–184; and H. Res. 540–544, were introduced. **Pages H7774–76**

Additional Cosponsors: **Pages H7776–78**

Reports Filed: There were no reports filed today.

Speaker: Read a letter from the Speaker wherein she appointed Representative Salazar to act as Speaker pro tempore for today. **Page H7659**

Chaplain: The prayer was offered by the guest Chaplain, Rabbi Ellen S. Wolintz-Fields, Congregation B'nai Israel, Toms River, New Jersey. **Page H7659**

Journal: The House agreed to the Speaker's approval of the Journal by a yea-and-nay vote of 240 yeas to 178 nays with 1 voting ''present'', Roll No. 622. **Pages H7659, H7674**

Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act: The House passed H.R. 2956, to require the Secretary of Defense to commence the reduction of the number of United States Armed Forces in Iraq to a limited presence by April 1, 2008, by a yea-and-nay vote of 223 yeas to 201 nays, Roll No. 624. **Pages H7674–H7719**

Point of Order sustained against:

Wilson (NM) motion to recommit the bill to the Committee on Armed Services with instructions to report the same back to the House forthwith with an amendment. **Pages H7717–18**

Agreed to table the Wilson (NM) motion to appeal the ruling of the Chair by a yea-and-nay vote of 224 yeas to 197 nays, Roll No. 623. **Pages H7718–19**

H. Res. 533, the rule providing for consideration of the bill, was agreed to by a yea-and-nay vote of 221 yeas to 196 nays, Roll No. 621, after agreeing to order the previous question by a recorded vote of 225 ayes to 197 noes, Roll No. 620. **Pages H7663–74**

Committee Resignation: Read a letter from Representative Sutton wherein she resigned from the Committee on the Budget, effective immediately. **Page H7719**

Committee Election: The House agreed to H. Res. 540, electing Representative Sutton to the Committee on the Judiciary, to rank immediately after Representative Johnson (GA). **Page H7719**

Section 8 Voucher Reform Act of 2007: The House passed H.R. 1851, to reform the housing choice voucher program under section 8 of the United States Housing Act of 1937, by a yea-and-nay vote of 333 yeas to 83 nays, Roll No. 629. **Pages H7726–60**

Agreed to the Capito motion to recommit the bill to the Committee on Financial Services with instructions to report the same back to the House forthwith with an amendment, by a recorded vote of 233 ayes to 186 noes, Roll No. 628. Subsequently, Representative Frank (MA) reported the bill back to the House with the amendment and the amendment was agreed to. **Pages H7758–60**

Pursuant to the rule, the amendment in the nature of a substitute recommended by the Committee on Financial Services now printed in the bill shall be considered as the original bill for the purpose of amendment. **Page H7735**

Agreed to:

Waters modified manager's amendment (No. 1 printed in H. Rept. 110–227) that includes increased rent structure flexibility while maintaining affordability requirements, an increase up to 12.5% in first year permitted housing agency voucher reserves, provisions spelling out HUD responsibilities with respect to access to HUD programs for persons with Limited English Proficiency, modifications to voucher inspection requirements, and changes to the Housing Innovation Program; **Pages H7745–48**

Velázquez amendment (No. 2 printed in H. Rept. 110–227) that requires that public housing agencies selected for participation in the Housing Innovation Program must comply with voucher and public housing domestic violence provisions from the Violence Against Women Act; and **Pages H7748–49**

Markey amendment (No. 4 printed in H. Rept. 110–227) that makes certain low-income tenants of the Heritage Apartments in Malden, Massachusetts eligible for enhanced housing vouchers after prepayment of a HUD mortgage and subsequent ownership transfer of the property without HUD restrictions that may jeopardize the housing affordability and allows for the transfer of Section 8 Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) contracts in Columbus, Ohio in the University District and in Cincinnati, Ohio in the Over-the-Rhine Community. **Pages H7751–52**

Rejected:

Gary G. Miller (CA) amendment (No. 3 printed in H. Rept. 110–227) that sought to impose a 7-year time limit on participation in the Section 8 program, to exclude the elderly and disabled from this requirement, and provide for a hardship exception (by a recorded vote of 151 ayes to 267 noes, Roll No. 625); **Pages H7749–51, H7755–56**

Chabot amendment (No. 5 printed in H. Rept. 110–227) that sought to strike the authorization of appropriations for the creation of 20,000 new vouchers each year for years FY 2008 through FY 2012 (by a recorded vote of 144 ayes to 277 noes, Roll No. 626); and **Pages H7752–54, H7756–57**

Hensarling amendment (No. 6 printed in H. Rept. 110–227) that sought to require that all adults in a household receiving Section 8 tenant assistance for more than 7 consecutive years must perform 20 hours per week of approved ''work activities;'' exemptions are provided for senior citizens, the disabled, those already exempt from TANF work requirements, and those who cannot access child care (by a recorded vote of 197 ayes to 222 noes, Roll No. 627). **Pages H7754–55, H7757**

Agreed that the Clerk be authorized to make technical and conforming changes to reflect the actions of the House. **Page H7760**

H. Res. 534, the rule providing for consideration of the bill, was agreed to by voice vote.

Pages H7719–26

Meeting Hour: Agreed that when the House adjourns today, it adjourn to meet at 4 p.m. tomorrow, and further, that when the House adjourns on that day, it adjourn to meet at 12:30 p.m. on Monday, July 16th for Morning Hour debate. **Page H7762**

Calendar Wednesday: Agreed by unanimous consent to dispense with the Calendar Wednesday business of Wednesday, July 18th. **Page H7762**

Board of Trustees of the Harry S Truman Scholarship Foundation—Appointment: The Chair announced the Speaker's appointment of the following Members of the House of Representatives to the Board of Trustees of the Harry S Truman Scholarship Foundation: Representative Skelton and Representative Hulshof. **Page H7762**

Presidential Message: Read a message from the President wherein he transmitted the report that assesses the status of each of the 18 Iraqi benchmarks contained in Public Law 110–28—referred to the Committee on Armed Services and the Committee on Foreign Affairs and ordered printed (H. Doc. 110–45). **Page H7762**

Quorum Calls—Votes: Five yea-and-nay votes and five recorded votes developed during the proceedings of today and appear on pages H7673, H7673–74, H7674, H7718–19, H7719, H7755–56, H7756–57, H7757, H7759, and H7760. There were no quorum calls.

Adjournment: The House met at 10 a.m. and adjourned at 11:59 p.m.

Committee Meetings

ENERGY-BASED DERIVATIVE TRADING

Committee on Agriculture: Subcommittee on General Farm Commodities and Risk Management held a hearing to review trading of energy-based derivatives. Testimony was heard from Walter Lukken, Acting Chairman and Commissioner, CFTC; Orice M. Williams, Director, Financial Markets and Community Investment, GAO; and public witnesses.

SUPPLEMENTAL ENERGY AND WATER, AND RELATED AGENCIES, AND COMMERCE, JUSTICE, SCIENCE, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS FISCAL YEAR 2008

Committee on Appropriations: Ordered reported the following appropriations for fiscal year 2008: Supplemental Energy and Water Development, and Related Agencies; and, as amended, the Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies.

AGRICULTURE, RURAL DEVELOPMENT, FDA, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS

Committee on Appropriations: Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies approved for full Committee action the Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies for Fiscal Year 2008.

DOD APPROPRIATIONS FISCAL YEAR 2008

Committee on Appropriations: Subcommittee on Defense met in executive session and approved for full Committee action the Defense Appropriations for Fiscal Year 2008.

MENTAL HEALTH

Committee on Armed Services: Subcommittee on Military Personnel held a hearing on mental health. Testimony was heard from the following officials of the Department of Defense: S. Ward Casscells, M.D., Assistant Secretary, Health Affairs; VADM Donald C. Arthur, USN, Co-Chair, Defense Health Board Task Force Mental Health, Surgeon General, Department of the Navy, Bureau of Medicine and Surgery; and a public witness.

ALTERNATIVES FOR IRAQ'S FUTURE

Committee on Armed Services: Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations held a hearing on A Third Way: Alternatives for Iraq's Future, (Part 1). Testimony was heard from GEN Wesley K. Clark, USA (ret.); and a public witness.

DEFENSE INSTALLATION ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

Committee on Armed Services: Subcommittee on Readiness held a hearing to receive testimony on emerging contaminants and environmental management at Department of Defense installations. Testimony was heard from Alex A. Beehler, Assistant Deputy Under Secretary, (Environment, Safety and Occupational Health), Department of Defense; and John B. Stephenson, Director, Natural Resources and Environment, GAO.

JUVENILE JUSTICE/DELINQUENCY PREVENTION

Committee on Education and Labor: Subcommittee on Healthy Families and Communities and the Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism and Homeland Security of the Committee on the Judiciary held, joint hearing on Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act: Overview and Perspectives. Testimony was heard from Derrick Johnson, Vice-Chair, Juvenile Justice Commission, State of Arizona; David Freed. Cumberland County District Attorney, State of Pennsylvania; Paul Lawrence, Goffstown District Court, New Hampshire State Juvenile Justice Advisory Group; and public witnesses.

AFRICAN GROWTH AND OPPORTUNITY

Committee on Foreign Affairs: Subcommittee on Africa and Global Health held a hearing on Beyond Oil and Gas: African Growth and Opportunity Act's Benefits to Africa. Testimony was heard from Florizelle Liser, Assistant U.S. Trade Representative, Africa; and public witnesses.

HUMAN RIGHTS AND U.S. FOREIGN POLICY

Committee on Foreign Affairs: Subcommittee on International Organizations, Human Rights and Oversight held a hearing on Ideals vs. Reality in Human Rights and U.S. Foreign Policy: The Cases of Azerbaijan, Cuba, and Egypt. Testimony was heard from public witnesses.

BORDER COMMUNITY FIRST RESPONDERS

Committee on Homeland Security: Subcommittee on Emergency Communications, Preparedness, and Response held a hearing entitled ''Challenges Facing First Responders in Border Communities.'' Testimony was heard from Leesa Morrison, Director, Department of Homeland Security, State of Arizona; and public witnesses.

U.S. ATTORNEY INVESTIGATION; REPUBLICAN NATIONAL COMMITTEE SUBPOENA

Committee on the Judiciary: Subcommittee on Commercial and Administrative Law held a hearing on the Continuing Investigation into the U.S. Attorneys Controversy and Related Matters. The Subcommittee adopted a motion to uphold the Chair's ruling regarding Harriet Miers' failure to appear and regarding her failure to answer questions and provide relevant documents as directed. The Chair ruled that Harriet Miers' refusal to comply with the subpoena and appear at this hearing, and to answer questions and provide relevant documents regarding these concerns, cannot be properly justified on executive privilege or related immunity grounds.

The Subcommittee authorized the Chairman of the Judiciary Committee to issue a subpoena to the Republican National Committee, for e-mail documents the Committee has requested pertaining to its investigation into the recent termination of United States Attorneys and the related subjects.

DEA'S REGULATION OF MEDICINE

Committee on the Judiciary: Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism and Homeland Security held a hearing on the Drug Enforcement Administration's Regulation of Medicine. Testimony was heard from Joseph T. Rannazzisi, Deputy Assistant Administrator, Office of Diversion Control, DEA, Department of Justice; David Murray, Director, Counter Drug Technology, Office of National Drug Control Policy; and public witnesses.

NATIONAL OFFSHORE AQUACULTURE ACT

Committee on Natural Resources: Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife and Oceans held a hearing on H.R. 2010, National Offshore Aquaculture Act. Testimony was heard from VADM Conrad C. Lautenbacher, USN (ret.), Under Secretary, Oceans and Atmosphere and Administrator, NOAA, Department of Commerce; Sue Aspelund, Special Assistant to the Commissioner, Department of Fish and Game, State of Alaska; and public witnesses.

MISCELLANEOUS MEASURES

Committee on Natural Resources: Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands held a hearing on the following bills: H.R. 105, Northern Neck National Heritage Area Study Act; H.R. 1083, To amend the Act establishing the Rivers of Steel National Heritage Area in order to include Butler County, Pennsylvania, within the boundaries of that heritage area; H.R. 1145, Muscle Shoals National Heritage Area Act; H.R. 1297, Freedom's Way National Heritage Area Act; H.R. 1815, To extend the authorization for the Coastal Heritage Trail in the

State of New Jersey; and H.R. 1885, Santa Cruz Valley National Heritage Area Act. Testimony was heard from Representatives Cramer, Olver, English of Pennsylvania and LoBiondo; Janet Snyder Matthews, Associate Director, Cultural Resources, National Park Service, Department of the Interior; and public witnesses.

FEDERAL MERIT-BASED EMPLOYMENT

Committee on Oversight and Government Reform: Subcommittee on Federal Workforce, Postal Services and the District of Columbia held a hearing on Ensuring a Merit-Based Employment System: An Examination of the Merit Systems Protection Board and the Office of Special Counsel. Testimony was heard from Scott J. Bloch, Special Counsel, Office of Special Counsel; Neil A. G. McPhie, Chairman, Merit Systems Protection Board; Morton Rosenberg, Senior Analyst, CRS, Library of Congress; and public witnesses.

PAKISTAN/AFGHANISTAN OUTLOOK

Committee on Oversight and Government Reform: Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs held a hearing on Pakistan at the Crossroads; Afghanistan in the Balance. Testimony was heard from Richard A. Boucher, Assistant Secretary, Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, Department of State.

SBA'S MICROLOAN AND TRADE PROGRAMS

Committee on Small Business: Held a hearing SBA's Microloan and Trade Programs. Testimony was heard from Michael Hager, Associate Administrator, Capital Access, SBA; and public witnesses.

TRANSPORTATION WORKER ID CARD SYSTEM

Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure: Subcommittee on Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation held a hearing on Transportation Worker Identification Card System. Testimony was heard from the following officials of the Department of Homeland Security: RADM Brian Salerno, USCG, Assistant Commandant, Policy and Planning; and Maurine Fanguy, TWIC Program Manager, Transportation Security Administration; and public witnesses.

BEACHES ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AND COASTAL HEALTH ACT REAUTHORIZATION

Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure: Subcommittee on Water Resources held a hearing on Reauthorization of the Beaches Environmental Assessment and Coastal Health Act. Testimony was heard from Representatives Pallone and Bilbray; Benjamin H. Grumbles, Assistant Administrator, Office of Water, EPA; Anu K. Mittal, Director, Natural Resources and Environment, GAO; Lisa Jackson, Commissioner, Department of Environmental Protection, State of New Jersey; Patrick Heaney, Town Supervisor, Southhampton, New York; and public witnesses.

VA PROCUREMENT

Committee on Veterans' Affairs: Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity held a hearing on Federal Procurement. Testimony was heard from the following officials of the SBA: William D. Elmore, Assistant Administrator; and Louis Celli, Jr., Chairman, Advisory Committee on Veterans' Business Affairs; Scott F. Denniston, Director, Center for Veterans' Enterprise, Department of Veterans Affairs; Paul A. Denett, Administrator, Office of Procurement Policy, OMB; Charles Cervantes, Special Assistant to the Director, Office of Small Business Programs, Department of Defense; representatives of veterans organizations; and public witnesses.

WOMEN AND MINORITY VETERANS

Committee on Veterans' Affairs: Subcommittee on Health and the Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs held a joint hearing on issues facing Women and Minority Veterans. Testimony was heard from Representative Wilson of New Mexico; the following officials of the Department of Veterans Affairs: Shirley A. Quarles, R.N., Chair, Advisory Committee on Women Veterans; COL. Reginald Malebranche, USA (ret.) Member, Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans; Maureen Murdoch, M.D., VA Medical Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota; Betty Moseley Brown, Associate Director, Center for Women Veterans; and Lucretia McClenney, Director, Center for Minority Veterans; L. Tammy Duckworth, Director, Department of Veterans Affairs, State of Illinois; representatives of veterans organizations; and public witnesses.

AGING OUT OF FOSTER CARE

Committee on Ways and Means: Subcommittee on Income Security and Family Support held a hearing on Children Who "Age Out" of the Foster Care System. Testimony was heard from Representative Cardoza; Cornelia Ashby, Director, Education, Workforce and Income Security, GAO; and public witnesses

INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY MANAGEMENT

Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence: Subcommittee on Intelligence Community Management

met in executive session to hold a hearing on Intelligence Community Management. Testimony was heard from departmental witnesses

NUCLEAR TERRORISM

Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence: Subcommittee on Terrorism, Human Intelligence Analysis and Counterterrorism met in executive session to hold a hearing on Nuclear Terrorism. Testimony was heard from departmental witnesses.

ENERGY INDEPENDENCE WITH 150 MPG VEHICLES

Select Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming: Held a hearing entitled ''Plugging into Energy Independence with 150 MPG Vehicles.'' Testimony was heard from public witnesses.

COMMITTEE MEETINGS FOR FRIDAY, JULY 13, 2007

(Committee meetings are open unless otherwise indicated)

Senate

No meetings/hearings scheduled.

House

No Committee meetings are scheduled.

Next Meeting of the SENATE

9 a.m., Friday, July 13

Senate Chamber

Program for Friday: Senate will continue consideration of H.R. 1585, National Defense Authorization Act, and after a period of debate, vote on or in relation to Dorgan Amendment No. 2135 at approximately 9:30 a.m.

Next Meeting of the HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

4 p.m., Friday, July 13

House Chamber

Program for Friday: To be announced.

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