

of the Republican leadership in the House—a thousand mosquitoes—just biting, not accomplishing anything.

Families are too busy trying to make this week's paycheck last until the next to keep track of who is scoring political points. They worry about paying the electric bill, the mortgage bill or the tuition bill—not about games and gimmicks. In the history of American Government, partisan bickering has never saved a single job or kept one family from losing their home.

I hope Republicans will join us to confront the crises in our communities and around the world, and I hope they will start this afternoon when we vote on moving forward with the nomination of Christopher Hill.

To this point—this few short weeks we have been in session—we have had to file cloture on five of the President's nominees. The Secretary of Labor, a very important job—Hilda Solis—was held up. We had to invoke cloture. The Deputy Attorney General, a man by the name of Ogden, we had to invoke cloture on the Republicans' filibuster of him. In his job, second in command, he is in charge of all the criminal prosecutions in this country. He is also the chief administrator of the attorney general's office. We had to invoke cloture on that.

Two members of the Council of Economic Advisers—we had to invoke cloture. Who are these people? They are the primary economists on whom the President depends. We had to waste valuable time invoking cloture on two filibusters there.

Incredibly, now, tonight, we are going to invoke cloture on the Ambassador to Iraq. I talked to Secretary Gates just a couple of days ago about a number of issues. One of the things he brought up was—Gates said that every time he talks to General Odierno, he asks: When can I get my civilian commander, my civilian counterpart in Iraq? That is what this is all about. We did everything we could prior to the 2-week recess to let us have a vote. No; cloture. We have to file cloture on the Ambassador to Iraq. What a shame.

Christopher Hill is a strong and skilled negotiator who has tackled some of the most complex diplomatic challenges in the world. After he graduated from Bowdoin College, he joined the Peace Corps and served in Africa. He joined the Foreign Service immediately after that and served tours in half a dozen countries. He has been an ambassador in any number of countries and served so well. He earned a graduate degree from the Naval War College.

The man we will send to Iraq is no stranger to dealing with difficult governments. He has worked hard on ethnic civil wars. He successfully coordinated multilateral negotiations on North Korea's nuclear program and was a key player in the peace talks that ended the conflicts in both Kosovo and Bosnia.

General Petraeus has always said that the cure of Iraq's troubles will be

prescribed politically, not militarily. General Odierno has called for civilian help to secure what his brave troops have accomplished. Experts from the left and the right alike have warned against taking our eye off the ball in Iraq. Yet our top diplomat in that country where more than 4,000 Americans have given their lives—and each day, 143,000 more risk their own—sits and waits. When is this man going to be able to come and go to work? It is a shame we have to go through this process on the Ambassador to Iraq.

Each of our three Ambassadors to Iraq since the beginning of the war has called on us to urgently fill this gaping hole in our diplomatic lineup and to fill it with Ambassador Hill. He has spent his entire career in the Foreign Service, and he is ready to answer his country's call once again. It is simply wrong that we have to wait for this man to get over there.

I didn't bring the subject up with Secretary Gates; he brought it up.

I hope Republicans will not make us use all of the 30 hours of procedural time. What do I mean by this? For those who are watching, after we invoke cloture there is 30 hours of time. I say to everyone, we are going to vote on this when the 30 hours expires. If it is midnight tomorrow night or 1 a.m. Wednesday morning, we are going to vote. We are not going to hold this up 1 minute. It is absolutely wrong that we have to do this. We cannot wait any longer for civilian leadership in Iraq. Those who stand in the way should stand down so Ambassador Hill can get to work making America more secure and so the Senate can move to the important work of getting our economy back on track. Democrats and Republicans alike have an interest in stabilizing the Middle East. Democrats and Republicans alike have an interest in stabilizing our economy. But neither security abroad nor prosperity at home can happen unless both Democrats and Republicans work together toward those common goals.

As we begin our common work here after a 2-week recess, I hope my colleagues keep in mind what they saw and heard across the country in the last few weeks. It was what I heard, that hard-working people in their communities are struggling against conditions they did not create, that the earliest signs of recovery are beginning to bloom in the spring, and with much more to be done, they hope their leaders will be up to the task.

I urge my Republican friends to think twice before they return to the refrain: Whatever Democrats are for, we are against. I remind them what we are for is the success and security of the American people. If we are going to turn the tide, if we are going to change the tone, it is time to sing a different tune and not a song sung by Groucho Marx.

RECOGNITION OF THE REPUBLICAN LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

AMERICAN CHALLENGES

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, toward the end of 2006, President Bush concluded that American security interests in the Persian Gulf were not being advanced by the military strategy that was then in place in Iraq. He directed a review of military plans and decided to accept the recommendation of GEN David Petraeus and other advisers to adopt a counterinsurgency strategy that would involve a surge of ground forces to secure the Iraqi population. In the face of growing sectarian violence in Iraq, President Bush announced this strategy in early 2007, and the success of this strategy is now so widely acknowledged that it is hard to believe that just 2 years ago some in Washington wanted to cut off funding for our forces on the battlefield and establish arbitrary deadlines for withdrawal without consideration to conditions on the ground.

Over the past 2 years, the American people have witnessed a gradual maturation of the Iraqi Government. Iraqi security forces, working with coalition forces, took control of Basra and Sadr City. General Petraeus's efforts to shift responsibility to the Iraqi Army took place in front of a pessimistic audience that included, of course, Iran. But it worked.

During the recess, I visited General Odierno in Baghdad, and despite ongoing challenges in some provinces and the continuing need of the Iraqi security forces for coalition support, he is optimistic that the security gains made in Iraq are indeed sustainable.

That is why I was encouraged when President Obama moved away from his campaign promise to withdraw all U.S. forces from Iraq within 16 months of his inauguration. Instead, he accepted the advice of Generals Petraeus and Odierno to draw down forces at a pace that will recognize conditions on the ground, the challenges associated with Iraqi elections, and the need to maintain a presence to conduct training, force protection, and counterterrorism.

To those of us who ignored the calls for arbitrary deadlines for withdrawal and efforts to cut off funding for our forces in combat, it is likewise encouraging to see President Obama has accepted the recommendations of General McKiernan and General Petraeus to order a surge of additional forces in Afghanistan in order to succeed there. I visited with General McKiernan in Kabul last week, and he explained his plans to deploy these additional forces. He is mindful of the challenges associated with Afghan national elections, the need to continue expanding the Afghan National Army and police, and the need to combat corruption within