

Specifically, on this bill, the DOD authorization bill, which we will turn to at 3 o'clock, we will insist on amendments that respond aggressively and practically to the ongoing terrorist threat both here and abroad.

It is important to remember whom we are fighting. General Petraeus has said that 80 percent to 90 percent of the suicide bombers in Iraq are from outside the country, outside of Iraq. We are fighting al-Qaida, other terror groups, and the states that support them.

We cannot allow these terrorists to gain a new sanctuary even closer to the United States than Afghanistan or to gain access to other ungoverned areas in the Middle East that will give them a new stage to carry out their attacks.

It has always been in the U.S. interest, and it remains in the U.S. interest, to maintain stability in the Persian Gulf. It is important not to forget that either. We need to guard against an emboldened Iran, which is facilitating and capitalizing on the weakness of Iraq for its own advantage on the world stage. We must reassure our allies in Iraq, the Middle East, and the world that America remains committed to fighting terrorism wherever it is found.

Finally, as we proceed, we must remember we are at war and that our enemies will use any means at their disposal to harm us. They intend to strike us at home and abroad. They will exploit any opening we give them, and they will use every tool at their disposal.

Everyone in this Chamber has America's best interests at heart. But it will fall on Republicans in this debate to be particularly awake to the complexity of the terrorist threat.

Now, it is no accident we have not been attacked at home in nearly 6 years. We have kept terrorists at arm's length by bringing the fight to them. Republican amendments will build on the lessons we have learned over the past 6 years. They will reflect our commitment to security and continued vigilance, and we will insist they be heard. Republicans will succeed in improving this bill in ways that improve our war-fighting ability and our counterterrorism tools.

I yield the floor, Mr. President.

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

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I appreciate not only the comments of my distinguished counterpart, the senior Senator from Kentucky, but the manner in which they were offered, the tone. I would hope we can work together to get some of these things done, starting with this bill, the Defense authorization bill.

We have two wonderful Senators who are the managers of that bill, Senators LEVIN and WARNER. They have worked together in that committee for 25 years and are both dedicated patriots. They will do a good job managing this bill, no matter what happens on the floor.

I would also say that, coincidentally, I had a meeting today with the president of the American Medical Association. He came to talk about the SCHIP bill and how important it is we get that passed.

Also, in speaking with physicians about the Clinton health care plan that we did spend a lot of time on, as everyone knows, that legislation started out with 80 percent of the American people supporting a change in the health care policy in this country. With the huge amounts of money spent by mainly the insurance industry, with their "Harry and Louise" ads, that reversed, when it was all over, with less than half the people supporting that legislation. Huge amounts of money were spent denigrating that legislation.

Right now, as with the people who met with me today, they sure wish that legislation passed. It would have solved a lot of the problems we deal with here: medical malpractice and allowing the pooling of small employers so they can compete with large employers and have affordable insurance. But hindsight is 20/20. That was not accomplished. Hopefully, we can, with SCHIP, set a tone for what we can do with legislation as it relates to health care.

With the 9/11 and the ethics and lobbying reform, the proof is in the pudding. Are we going to have more delays? As my distinguished friend has indicated, if Republican staff comes to our staff and says: We are ready to go to conference, we will go, just like that. But I am not going to come out here anymore and have somebody come out and sideswipe it: We cannot do it because of this or that, always something standing in the way of it.

The American people are watching us. We are going to finish those two pieces of legislation before we leave in August. It is not a threat. It is what we have to do. The American people need us to do certain things. Can't we certainly pass ethics and lobbying reform? Can't we certainly pass the 9/11 Commission recommendations, which are 3 years old? The administration has not implemented those. In fact, as we know, we talk about one reason it passed overwhelmingly here and in the House is the Bush administration is given Ds and Fs on the implementation of this. We need to get this passed, and we need to get ethics reform passed. We need to get the 9/11 bill passed. I hope we can do that.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, will the majority leader yield for a question?

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I am happy to yield.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I do not know if the majority leader was preoccupied or not, but let me say again, we were prepared to go to conference on the 9/11 bill the Friday before the recess, and the request was not made by my good friend, which is fine. I would say, again, we are prepared to go to conference on the 9/11 bill. I would suggest we have our floor staffs

work out the language. I do not think there is any reason why we could not do that today.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I am happy. I am happy. I so appreciate that, very much appreciate that. I think it is good we try to have a good work environment the next few weeks. We have a lot of things to do. We have been through one of the most difficult issues that has ever faced this body, ever, in the 200-plus years we have been a country; that is, immigration reform. Friends against friends, it was a very difficult issue.

So I think it is time we are able to do what the Senate can do by unanimous consent. So I appreciate very much what my friend said. I look forward to that. I think it will be something the American people can look at and say: You know, those guys don't disagree on everything.

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 of morning business until 3 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each, with the time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees.

The majority leader is recognized.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

IMPLEMENTING THE 9/11 COMMISSION RECOMMENDATIONS ACT OF 2007

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee be discharged from further consideration of H.R. 1 and that the Senate then proceed to its consideration; that all after the enacting clause be stricken, and the text of S. 4, as passed the Senate on March 13, 2007, be inserted in lieu thereof; that the bill be read the third time, passed, and the motion to reconsider be laid on the table; that the Senate insist on its amendment, request a conference with the House on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses, and the Chair be authorized to appoint conferees on the part of the Senate.

I further ask unanimous consent that it not be in order to consider the conference report if it contains collective