

thanks for the service of their sons. Their brave sacrifice will never be forgotten.

On many occasions in recent months, this institution has debated the threat posed by Saddam Hussein and Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. Individual Senators have had honest disagreements about the right course to take in confronting Saddam Hussein. Now that our troops are engaged in battle against the forces of Saddam Hussein, we must speak with one voice.

The outcome of this conflict is not in doubt. Our military is the best equipped with the best trained force in the world's history. As the representative from Maine on the Senate Armed Services Committee, it has been my privilege and honor to work side by side with our military leaders to ensure this is the case.

If there is any message we could continue to send to the Members of the Iraqi military, it would be to express the ultimate futility of their continued resistance. The President has made clear, we come not as conquerors but as liberators.

War is a harsh, painful, brutal reality even when the goals are noble, even when the goals are security and freedom. As we have already seen, there is very little certainty in combat. In the fog of war, there are innumerable factors that might affect the course of battle. We often receive conflicting reports, confusing media accounts, and distorted descriptions of the battlefield. But one thing should never be in doubt, one thing is unmistakable: Our troops will prevail, and they will receive whatever support they need to bring this conflict to a successful end as rapidly as possible.

I express my gratitude to the families of the young men and women currently in harm's way who have been left behind. They truly carry a heavy burden, and they deserve the respect, the thanks, and the admiration of every American. As we have seen so painfully over the weekend, victory will not come without cost. While our military leaders will continue to do everything they can to minimize the danger that our troops will face, there is still much risk and much danger.

To the wives, the husbands, the parents, and the children of troops, thank you for your bravery, your strength, and your patriotism. Thank you for your love of country.

When I first came to the Senate over 6 years ago, I would not have imagined this moment. We lived in a different world then. But today, as our troops engage in battle, let us all show our unwavering support for our troops, thank them for their service, and express our heartfelt hope for their safe return.

FEDERAL SUPPORT FOR STATE AND LOCAL FIRST RESPONDERS

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, just as we stand behind our troops in Iraq, so

must we also unite here at home behind our first responders as they protect our communities from the threat of a terrorist attack.

As the chairman of the Governmental Affairs Committee, I have made helping first responders one of my top priorities. Now that we have confirmed Secretary Tom Ridge and helped to get the new Department of Homeland Security up and running, it is time to turn to strengthening the new Department's partnership with State and local governments and the first responders who protect our homeland.

On March 1, our home security structure began to come into place as Secretary Ridge incorporated nearly two dozen agencies into the new Department of Homeland Security. While this new framework will provide much needed focus to tackling the threat of a terrorist attack, we must also provide the resources to our communities and their police, firefighters, and emergency medical personnel who stand ready to respond to a crisis.

Just as they stand by to protect our citizens, our first responders deserve a government that stands by them.

In a recent conversation with Secretary Ridge, we discussed the fact that if disaster does strike, if there is another terrorist attack, it is our first responders, not some official from Washington, who would be on the front lines. I plan on holding a series of hearings and introducing legislation streamlining and strengthening Federal support for State and local homeland security efforts.

We must continue to combat terrorism at every stage. The war on terrorism has already yielded some very significant victories. The fall of the Taliban has denied al-Qaida its most important sanctuary. The capture of several high-ranking al-Qaida operatives has also pushed us forward in our quest to end terrorist attacks. Working with foreign governments, we have disrupted much of the al-Qaida network.

But we know that terrorist cells continue to operate around the world, and the threat in the United States remains high. The threat remains very real as terrorists still plot to attack our Nation.

Just as we must continue to attack the threats at their sources, we must also strengthen our ability to detect, prevent, deter, and respond to a terrorist attack.

Recently, I met with some 40 officials from communities around the State of Maine. I have also spoken with police officers, firefighters, and emergency medical staff personnel. They have all expressed concerns about navigating the maze of Federal homeland security funding.

I met recently with Maine's Adjutant General, GEN Joe Tinkham, who talked to me about the tangled web of some 40 Federal Agencies and Departments that have a role in combating terrorism and in funding local home-

land security efforts. He told me that, while underfunded, in some ways the previous system worked better for the State of Maine because there was much more flexibility. Now he finds that certain money is set aside that can only be used for equipment purchases, when what is needed is joint training to learn to use that equipment effectively in some communities.

The new Department of Homeland Security will address many of these concerns by helping to streamline and coordinate programs formerly administered by a number of different agencies. But we must follow up on these efforts to help the new Department enhance its efforts to fund first responders.

I have received a lot of advice on this issue from Maine's firefighters, police officers, and State and local officials. They have suggested a new partnership with the Department of Homeland Security that gives them the flexibility they need to meet whatever is the need for homeland security at the local level.

Last year, we put a downpayment on the needs of our communities. The increased funding of programs, such as the FIRE Act, and those within the Office of Domestic Preparedness, are important steps forward in providing the necessary resources.

But we must build on this success and provide a stronger framework. First responders' needs are as diverse as the States and the communities they protect. Our grant programs and other assistance must be flexible enough to reflect this diversity. But, unfortunately, that is not the case under the current approach.

Maine's first responders and local governments have told me their needs range from communications equipment to personnel to more effective training. Mainers, and others beyond the beltway, do not just have needs; they also have tremendously creative and effective ideas that can be channeled into the new coordinated community-based homeland security strategy.

Over the coming weeks, I will be holding hearings in the Committee on Governmental Affairs to begin to build a consensus for legislation helping homeland security transition many of its important grant programs into their new directorates. I plan to call on States, communities, and, most importantly, our first responders who stand on the front lines to learn how we can better meet their needs.

Listening to the ideas and needs of our communities and first responders will be the most effective way of developing legislation to make sure our homeland security dollars go as far as possible. We want legislation that will help provide the right resources to the right people.

Our President and Secretary Ridge have shown tremendous leadership in focusing the new Department's efforts, not only in developing a national strategy but in focusing its efforts outside Washington.

Congress must shift its homeland security focus from Washington to our borders, our shorelines, and our communities. I look forward to continuing to work with communities across Maine and around the country so that we can build a better and stronger homeland security partnership in the months and years ahead.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

A FAILING BUDGET

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, as was pointed out in the initial remarks of my friend and colleague from the State of Maine, we will have intensive consideration of the budget starting early tomorrow morning, and then concluding late Wednesday afternoon. And we are going to do so with very strict time constraints.

I want to be able to express my views on this legislation in terms of where I think we are in the consideration of the budget, and my concerns for where I think we will end up on Wednesday evening at the time of our vote. This is an enormously important matter that is before the Congress.

All of our thoughts and prayers and focus are outside this Chamber now, and with the brave men and women in our Armed Forces overseas. I think all of us are following this closely and have shared in the positive outcomes that many of those in the Armed Forces have experienced. And we have also felt the shattering sense of loss that has been experienced by many of the families, when we have seen the difficulties and the tragedies which have developed over this period of time.

Nonetheless, our work must go on. It is important, as we think about the extraordinarily brave men and women abroad, that we think about what this budget should really be all about. It seems to me the best way we can show appreciation for those service men and women and their sacrifice and their valor is to live up to the ideals they are fighting for so bravely. The budget, to a very important extent, reflect our priorities as a nation and that is what I want to address this afternoon.

As we all sat in this Senate chamber last week, casting votes on budget amendments hour after hour, it was striking how detached the proceedings were from the real concerns of the American people. While they were concentrating intently on every detail of the unfolding war in Iraq, the Senate was considering a budget that our Republican colleagues had proposed without any funding whatsoever for the enormous cost of the war and the potentially even more enormous cost of its aftermath.

Tomorrow, the President will send to Congress a request for additional funds to cover the initial costs of war in Iraq. There is no doubt that all of us in Congress will want to provide that support to our troops as quickly as possible.

As we watched events unfold on our television screens in recent days, it became clearer than ever that more needs will arise because of the war—both in the short term and the long term. We deserve a budget that does not squander the treasury in time of war. We need a budget that provides for our troops and meets our priorities at home.

In this time of national unity, we owe it to our troops and to all Americans to make this the best America we can be. That is patriotism at its best—to support our men and women abroad, and to fight at home for the values they represent—for a strong and secure America, for a strong economy, for equality and opportunity for all, for better jobs and better schools and better health care.

Mr. President, \$1.6 trillion in new tax breaks for the wealthy will not win this war. It will not help laid off workers and their families. It will not strengthen our schools or provide prescription drugs for our seniors. It is as though this budget had been drafted in a sound-proofed room, so that the sounds of war and the voices of the American people could not be heard. On the opposite side of the Capitol, the House of Representatives has already passed an even more extreme Republican budget, slashing hundreds of billions of dollars from urgent domestic priorities, including some for which even the Bush administration had requested support. Any objective observer of Capitol Hill can quickly see how out of touch this Congress has become.

A time of war should be a time of national unity—of Americans pulling together and sharing the burdens fairly. The people's elected representatives should reinforce this national spirit with leadership that says we are all in this together, that we are here to help one another. As we confront the grave threats of terrorism and war, it is particularly important to build a broad national consensus at home based on our shared values. Many of us have become deeply concerned in recent years that our policies are moving farther and farther away from these shared national values. Increasingly, major decision about how America should be governed are being made by a narrow partisan majority in Congress with utter disdain for the basic needs of the overwhelming majority of our people.

This Republican budget says it all. The last thing that America needs in this time of war is policies that divide us—which concentrate so much of the Nation's resources in the hands of the wealthiest few, while ignoring the needs of tens of millions of hard-working families. Especially at this moment when we are sending young American men and women into harm's way to defend our highest ideals, we in Congress have a responsibility to support policies which keep faith with those ideals.

It is bad enough that the Republican budget fails to meet that challenge. It

is even worse that the narrow Republican majorities in the Senate and House are bent on rushing the budget through Congress quickly, while public attention is preoccupied with the war. If it ever passes, this budget will be part of the collateral damage caused by the war, haunting us for years to come.

It is astonishing that our Senate Republican colleagues who protested so loudly about the failure of Senate Democrats to produce a budget last year are themselves proposing such an atrocious budget this year. Passing no budget would be better than passing this irresponsible budget. The worst thing would be to lock in these bad policy choices for years to come.

We recognize that it will take no small amount of political courage four enough of our Republican colleagues to join us in voting down this budget. Hopefully, it will happen.

The time is past for debate about whether we should go to war with Iraq. Now that our troops are engaged in battle, we all join together in praying for their safety and for a quick and successful end to the conflict.

We need a budget which honestly addresses the cost of the war and the future rebuilding of Iraq. At a time when our troops in the field are being asked to make great sacrifices, the least that this Congress owes them is to be honest about the burden we are undertaking in Iraq.

Even if the war ends quickly and successfully, the rebuilding of Iraq will be a lengthy and costly process that will make this budget obsolete on the day it is passed. The Feingold Amendment was a first step to address the cost of the war for the next few months, but Republican leaders boasted that they would remove the amendment from the final bill. The Nation's budget must not be turned into a vehicle for such gross political deception—for concealing costs rather than setting sound priorities. This is a time of high national purpose for America. It should be no less on the floor of the Senate.

We need a budget which will also strengthen America at home. When our troops return, we want them to come home to a strong economy and secure jobs. We want them to come home to better schools for their children, not schools facing drastic budget cuts, fewer teachers and overcrowded classrooms. We want them to be able to afford health care and health insurance for their families.

This budget fails all of these tests. It rejects the measures needed to restore the economy and to deal with layoffs and rising unemployment. Instead, it embraces rigid right-wing policies that have not worked and will not work and do not distribute the burden fairly. In 2001, President Bush pushed \$1.3 trillion in tax cuts through Congress that disproportionately benefit the wealthiest taxpayers. Now, the Administration is seeking an additional \$1.6 trillion in tax cuts that are even more heavily slanted toward the rich. That is not the