

are serving so nobly in Iraq to bring freedom, democracy, and the rule of law to that country.

The resolution expressed the sentiment and views of the Senate in a clear, firm, and bipartisan manner. In particular, it made clear our expectation that the Senate be kept apprised of the ongoing investigations being conducted in the Department of Defense and of the actions being taken to ensure that these incidents never occur again.

The resolution also made clear that the appropriate committees of the Senate will be exercising their oversight responsibilities to ensure these ends. This is not just the right thing to do; this is the Senate's duty and our obligation to the American people—indeed, to the victims, to the families, and to the Iraqi people.

The Senate has already acted quickly and deliberately to address the heinous actions perpetrated by a few at the Abu Ghraib prison. Last week, the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence held a closed-door session to hear from representatives of the intelligence community regarding the CIA's role. The Senate Armed Services Committee held a full hearing last Friday on this matter with the Secretary of Defense, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and several other senior Defense Department officials appeared. Indeed, today, the Armed Services Committee is meeting again to receive testimony from Major General Taguba, who investigated and reported on the Abu Ghraib prison abuses.

We are also working in a bipartisan manner to address the issue of appropriate access to further evidence of the atrocities at Abu Ghraib. And at the leadership level on both sides of the aisle, we are working with the ranking member and chairman of the Armed Services Committee to establish a process whereby materials can be viewed. As well, it is likely that we will afford the Secretary of Defense another opportunity to answer questions from Senators in the near future.

I have also consulted with various committee chairmen about items that might be in their committee's jurisdiction as this investigation unfolds, so that the appropriate Senate tools are applied judiciously to buttress the work of the executive branch in getting to the bottom of this scandal, no matter where it leads.

In closing, I ensure my colleagues and the American people that the Senate will continue to hold hearings and briefings and take other steps, as necessary, to ensure that justice is served, that preventive action is taken, that those responsible are held accountable, and that all of this is done in a very fair, deliberate, and open manner.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The minority leader is recognized.

ADVANCING THE AGENDA

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, first, I express my support for the remarks just made by the majority leader with regard to the position of the Senate on a bipartisan basis regarding the tragedy involving prisoner abuse. I hope the limited debate that was devoted to the resolution last night will not be seen by anyone as minimizing our strong feelings and the unanimity with which we wanted to express those feelings through that resolution.

I appreciate the effort made by many of our colleagues who participated in the drafting of the resolution, and I am grateful for the strong show of support expressed through the resolution last night.

We condemn these acts. We apologize to the world community for the involvement of the United States in the humiliation and the extraordinary violation of human rights that we have witnessed with the photographs themselves. We also wanted to say again that we recognize this is the exception to U.S. military department, not the rule, and that the vast majority of military men and women have served admirably, served their country and the cause, have advanced the goal, and have deserved our commendation and thanks. I think it is critical that we keep that in balance. I hope that as we continue to conduct oversight properly, we maintain not only the interest in holding those at the lower ends of the military echelon accountable, but I would hope we would not allow anyone to use those directly involved, whose pictures are shown, as the scapegoats for everything else that happened. I still have yet to see the degree of accountability up and down the chain of command that I would think would go without question.

We will have a lot more to say about accountability, responsibility, and those in the higher echelons of Government and the military who themselves ought to be asked to account for their actions and their decisions. In that regard, I would hope we could continue to press for even more oversight as the Armed Services Committee is doing today. Someone proposed a select committee, a bipartisan, bicameral select committee to allow for a more thorough investigation in a collective way, rather than have the scores, I guess, of subcommittees and full committees on both sides of the Congress reviewing this material.

Perhaps one committee, which could be formed with the exclusive purpose of reviewing the facts and coming to some conclusion, may be of value. I am not proposing it today. I noted that others have made this suggestion, and I think it merits our consideration.

I know the majority leader also talked about nominations. Last week, we confirmed I believe it was 19 ambassadorial nominations and a number of other executive appointments. We will continue to work with our Republican colleagues, but as many have heard me

say on countless occasions, this has to be reciprocal. We cannot be confirming nominations and dealing with the judicial appointments and all of the other things expected of us if the Democratic nominees continue to languish on the calendar and in the administration itself. We have over a dozen Democratic nominees who have not yet been given even vetting, much less the actual official nomination.

We will continue to work with our Republican colleagues and with the administration, but we have to be given the confidence that there will be reciprocity and some degree of appreciation for the need to move all nominees, regardless of political affiliation or of position.

There are two other issues I wish to talk about briefly. First of all, I wish to thank Judge Becker, who has been involved now for many months in helping the Senate find a resolution to the complicated, controversial, and complex array of challenges we face with regard to asbestos.

After the vote on asbestos a few weeks ago, Senator FRIST and I asked Judge Becker if he would be willing to engage in mediation to see if we can move forward on a number of the outstanding questions.

Judge Becker worked tirelessly for the last couple of weeks and met with Senator FRIST and me almost on a daily basis to provide us with his progress reports. We focused on claims values, projections, and the overall amount of the fund. Unfortunately, we were not able to move nearly as far as many of us would have hoped on the issue of claims values. Some movement I think was made but little on projections. Perhaps the greatest movement was made on the overall amount. Business came up a little bit, from 114, with a \$10 billion contingency, to 116, with a \$12 billion contingency. Labor came down from 154 to 134, with a \$15 billion contingency.

I am deeply troubled by the insurance industry. The insurance industry again issued a statement in the form of a letter that said they will not support a legislative response to asbestos. Their intransigence was a major problem in bringing any kind of resolution to this matter.

I am not giving up. I am pleased that Senator FRIST has agreed to meet again this week to ensure that our discussions and perhaps our negotiations can continue as well. This is too important an issue simply to say we failed. We need to keep the pressure on. We need to find a way with which to resolve these three outstanding issues in particular: the overall funding level, the issue of claims values and appropriating the necessary values to circumstances, and then certainly our projections, how many people will definitely be affected, and how can we then come to some conclusion about the other outstanding questions involving existing cases as well as what happens if the fund runs out and is sunset.