

will be back on the floor is pension legislation. We are very close to an agreement on that. We will be able to do that before Thanksgiving, as well, if we continue to make the progress that we have made over the last 2 weeks. We are hoping to reach a unanimous consent agreement that would allow the Senate to proceed on that pensions bill in a reasonable period of time.

I keep stressing reasonable period of time, keeping time requirements down, because in order to accomplish all of this, it is going to take a lot of organization, efficiency, understanding, and tolerance on the part of all of our colleagues as we go through.

Finally, I mention our continued efforts on the Executive Calendar, as well as a number of other legislative items that will be in wrapup. We will consider those nominations and clear legislation each day this week as they become available, a lot of work over a very short period of time.

That gets us through this week. Then people ask, what about next week? Until we see the pacing over the next several days, it is going to be impossible for me to really know exactly when we are going to be out. But I remain hopeful that we can work through the issues that I just mentioned and finish this week.

The next question: When does this week end? Does it end Friday afternoon, Saturday, or Sunday? I cannot answer that yet until we get a little bit further.

There is a chance we could do all of that by late Friday afternoon. However, if it becomes necessary to stay longer, either into the weekend on Saturday or into next week, then we will certainly do just that. Senators are going to have to remain flexible with their schedules beyond Friday. I do want to at least throw out that a week-end schedule would be possible because I know a lot of people have things scheduled. So please keep your calendars flexible.

In December, I can also say the following just for planning purposes, and that is that we will not be in for votes in December before Monday, December 12. I will not know until later this week, Saturday night or maybe Monday night of next week exactly what the plans will be for the week beginning December 12. So again I ask our colleagues to keep their schedule flexible in case we have no choice but to return sometime during that week.

What I have just said is going to stir the pot with lots of questions coming forward, but that is about as much as I know right now. I will share the information on schedule with colleagues as soon as it becomes apparent to me based on how much work we get done today, tomorrow, the next day, and over the course of this week.

On another issue, but related to the bill that we are returning to shortly, we are resuming consideration of the National Defense Authorization Act of 2006, day No. 6, and we will complete

that bill tomorrow. I do want to thank Senator WARNER for his steady leadership. Under the guidance of our chairman, we have been able to proceed in a very orderly and smooth manner on a very important bill.

Last month, I sent a request to the minority leader asking for his agreement to keep amendments limited to issues that are important to our military personnel and armed services and that are within the jurisdiction of the Senate Armed Services Committee. Fortunately, we were able to reach agreement and do just that. I do want to thank our colleagues for their patience and cooperation in allowing us to move forward on a bill that is central to America's national security.

MOMENTOUS AND HISTORIC TIMES FOR AMERICA

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, these are momentous and historic times for America. In just 4 years, we have toppled two of the most brutal regimes in human history and liberated 50 million people from tyranny. Afghanistan and Iraq are now governed by the consent of the people under constitutions that have been ratified by the popular vote. Many people simply would not have believed that just several years ago.

Next month, on December 15, the Iraqi people will vote to form a permanent government. On that day, they will show, once more, their tremendous courage, boldness, and fortitude in moving their country toward full democracy and independence.

While the news media focuses on the terrorist activity and the terrorist insurgency, by any standard of history, Iraq and Afghanistan are making remarkable progress. Only 4 years ago, Saddam Hussein and the Taliban seemed like permanent, malignant fixtures in the Middle East, but today Saddam sits in prison on trial for his life, and the Taliban no longer rules the Afghani people.

Meanwhile, progress is cropping up all over the region. Again, the news media simply does not cover it, and we always hear excuses why that might be the case. But if one just looks back, they will see that Egypt has just held its freest elections in history.

I had the opportunity to be in Lebanon about a month after this, in April. But this spring, on March 14, the Lebanese people rose up in a remarkable protest that was indeed televised throughout the world. We all saw it. After 30 years of occupation, Syria was forced to withdraw. Libya has given up its weapons of mass destruction program and is now cooperating with international inspectors. Kuwait has granted full political rights to women, and democracy is slowly beginning to take root in Saudi Arabia.

All of this has been made possible by the bravery, valor, and strength of our men and women in uniform. They deserve our deepest respect, gratitude, and our unwavering commitment to

the success of their mission. These young people heard the call of duty and they went to the frontlines to defend America.

Every day, at risk to their own lives, our soldiers are helping the Iraqis secure a democratic future. They are training Iraqi forces to defend and protect the Iraqi people, and real progress is being made. The Iraqis are getting stronger and they are getting more skilled at the dangerous work of facing down the terrorist enemy.

In the recent Tal Afar operation, Iraqi forces outnumbered coalition forces for the first time in a major engagement. Eleven Iraqi combat battalions were independently employed in Tal Afar, twice the number than in Fallujah operations this year. That is progress.

Currently, 116 Iraqi security forces are conducting operations, and Iraqi civilians are gaining confidence handling the matters there and in providing tips and information to help defeat the insurgents in the region.

Meanwhile, Iraq continues to build and improve its infrastructure. Again, you don't see it on the nightly news or on the 24-hour coverage. Since the liberation, coalition forces have helped complete over 4,000 reconstruction projects, including 3,400 public schools, 304 water projects, 257 fire and police stations, and 149 health facilities.

Under Saddam, Iraq's infrastructure was in shambles. Citizens were not allowed free access to the media or to communicate freely with one another. Saddam maintained his iron grip by keeping his people fearful and totally cut off from the outside world. But now that has changed. Slowly but surely, under the democratic leadership, Iraq is emerging as a modern country. Internet subscribers have risen from 5,000 to 196,000. It is opening up. Light is shining into the country and to the people of Iraq.

Now over 4.5 million Iraqis have telephone service, and that is a fourfold increase to what it was before the war. Under Saddam there was nothing such as that. There was no independent media. Today, Iraq has more than 100 newspapers and magazines. There are over 40 commercial television stations broadcasting to an eager Iraqi public. They are hearing and seeing things for the first times in their lives.

We hear the critics hurling invective and level false charges against the administration. That is disappointing. We know some are, indeed, trying to rewrite history. We hear it on the Senate floor and we see it on the television news shows. This rewriting of history is wrong. It shows, to my mind, very little respect for the very things—the freedom, the democracy, the transparency, letting the light shine in—the sort of things our men and women are fighting for overseas.

At the same time that we hear this invective and these false charges, brave men and women—American and, as I just mentioned, Iraqi coalition forces,

and Afghanis—are working hard to promote democracy and freedom in the heart of the Middle East. We salute them.

Governments that were once sworn enemies of the United States are now sworn enemies of the terrorists they once harbored and people who feared their government are now active participants in its transformation. It is huge progress.

The Defense authorization bill before us provides our soldiers with the resources and the training, the technology, equipment, and the authorities they need to win this global war on terror. From cutting-edge technologies to personnel protection systems, the authorization bill keeps our military system strong so our men and women in uniform can keep America safe.

I look forward to passage of the Defense authorization bill tomorrow. The Senate has no higher duty than to protect and defend our fellow citizens.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Missouri.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to proceed as in morning business for up to 10 minutes.

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

JULIE DAMMANN

Mr. BOND. Mr. President it is both with deep gratitude and regret that I announce to my colleagues the liberation of my Chief of Staff, Julie Dammann, from the public sector.

Julie has been with me since I came to town in 1987 and has been a perfectly reliable source of sound judgment, energy, and friendship.

Within any successful enterprise, there is the heart of the operation. In the case of Julie, she has been the heart, the legs, the mind, the backbone, and the can-do spirit of my staff.

In addition to her professional service, she always subsumed her interests to mine, to the Senate, to the public interest, and most important, to our country. For the Nation, she has been a loyal public servant of the first order and a true patriot.

For me, from the time she first marched into my office, she has been my friend. Remarkably, from that first day to the present, through 19 Congressional sessions, 3 reelections, marriage, motherhood, and her bravely defiant and prevailing fight against cancer, she has never stopped. Chemotherapy met its match. She never rested, and she never let me rest either. F. Scott Fitzgerald once said that "action is character." In that case, Julie is character. Some who have dealt with her would say "character" is entirely appropriate.

Among her many unique talents is what I have learned is referred to as multitasking. At any given time, she can be talking with me, listening to C-SPAN, Blackberrying instructions to

staff, while checking out statistics of the previous Vikings game and evaluating the potential draft picks 9 months in advance. When she is talking, we all listen as fast as we can, but it can be very hard to keep up.

Our great country sends a lot of talent and integrity to Washington to staff our congressional offices and Julie is as good as I have seen.

Few understand the high-profile issues that are in the papers every day. Julie comprehends those "big" issues, but is extraordinary with the issues that are low on visibility and high on complexity. She has handled issues including farm credit, patent protection, voting reform, postal reform, highway transportation funding formulas, and California's clean air enforcement regulations, just to mention a few. Her intellectual dexterity has earned her extraordinary respect among her colleagues who have worked with her; and particularly those who have worked against her.

Julie began her work for the Senate in 1979, as an intern with Senator Rudy Boschwitz, eventually coming to Washington in 1982 as one of his legislative assistants—where one of her first major assignments was the Highway bill.

In 1987, after joining my staff as Legislative Director, she met Rolf Dammann at the National Republican Senatorial Committee who was apparently interested in more than her highly-regarded agricultural acumen. Rolfs new found interest in Budget and appropriations issues eventually paid off and they were married—after the 1988 election, of course. They both enjoy politics, history, golf, and German beer. As legendary Green Bay Packers coach once said, "On third and long, I'll take the beer drinkers to milk drinkers any day." But more on the legendary Packers later.

Rolf and Julie are the proud parents of two daughters, Monika who is now 10, and Paula 8.

In 1997, Julie became my Chief of Staff.

During consideration of the Fiscal Year 1988 Va/HUD appropriations bill, we were able to expedite completion of the bill by successfully appealing to Senators that Julie needed to leave the floor to have her second daughter who was due to arrive that very day. Betting on the Senate internally to be family-friendly was a bold strategy Julie suggested, but it worked.

I noted to the Senate that:

I want to make a special mention of my chief of staff, Julie Dammann, whose second child was due today and she stayed with us throughout all the proceedings and wanted to see the VA-HUD bill delivered first. She has been an invaluable help in all legislative activities and helped us shepherd this through. So, a very special thank you, and best wishes to Julie, to Rolf and their other daughter, Monika. Again, I express my appreciation.

Senator MIKULSKI echoed the comments saying:

I hope that she can go home, rest easy, put her feet up and we are looking forward to

being the proud Godparents of Bond-Mikulski. Maybe we will name something after her in conference.

In any event, the bill passed, and Paula arrived.

Julie was born in Roseville, MN and graduated from the University of Minnesota while also becoming a diehard Gopher, Vikings and Twins fan. For those indiscretions, she was forced to undertake an amnesty program and extensive, but unsuccessful, Bond-office Missouri rehabilitation program.

The fact that she was able to stay in my employ after the Twins-Cardinals World Series of 1987 an epic tragedy which occurred in the horrible chamber the twins call a baseball stadium, speaks volumes to her otherwise high value.

In fact, the only successful indoctrination resulted in the staff being forced to root against the arch-rival Green Bay Packers. Even one of my leatherneck Marines on staff, a Packer fan, minds his football manners around Julie.

Rolfs father, a native of Germany, bought Julie a 2-foot-tall Packers NFL action figure for Christmas one year as a joke—it sat in the garage unopened for over a year until it was re-gifted to a friend in Germany. Julie believes that the opposition should be given little room to breath and that U.S. citizenship is a privilege which should not be abused.

But while competitive, she always respected the process and the people on both sides working diligently to pursue the agenda they were elected or hired to pursue.

Through all the pressures, high expectations, and fast city life, I think that Julie may be proudest of her terrific family and, proudest that to this day, she quite obviously remains a small town Minnesota gal—hard work, loyalty, integrity, optimism, enthusiasm, and courage, which can often be misinterpreted in Julie's case as stubbornness.

Her parents, the late Dr. Paul Hasbargen and Mrs. Ervina Hasbargen made Washington a better place by producing Julie and lending her to the Federal Government.

For me, having Julie has been one of my greatest blessings in public life. In this case, it is unlike losing one member of the family because I am simultaneously losing a colleague, a trusted advisor, and, yes, at times a mother. We know that she will be very successful in the private sector, with her intelligence, experience and drive.

Julie, with the deepest affection, we have been honored to be near you for so many years. We will miss you. We wish you and your family the very best.

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. DORGAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be dispensed with.