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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable JON TESTER, a Senator from the State of Montana.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Our Father God, use our lawmakers today as Your instruments. Give them Your wisdom so that they can find solutions to the complex problems that beset our Nation. Strengthen them to serve and honor You by helping the oppressed. Keep them from fear and frustration as You equip and empower them to accomplish Your will on Earth.

May they find Your guidance throughout this day by seeking You in personal prayer. When they call, answer their petitions with Your mighty power and guard those who put their trust in You. Replenish their resources with Your peace that passes understanding.

We pray in Your righteous Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable JON TESTER led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. BYRD).

The assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, July 10, 2007.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby

appoint the Honorable JON TESTER, a Senator from the State of Montana, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ROBERT C. BYRD,
President pro tempore.

Mr. TESTER thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, we are going to be in a period of morning business for an hour. The majority will control the second half of morning business, the Republicans will control the first half of morning business. We had a conversation last night, the distinguished Republican leader and I, and the decision was made at that time that we are going to do our very best on the Webb amendment to come up with a side by side so we can have, sometime today, votes on those two amendments. Following that, there will be another amendment offered, and we will move along on this most important piece of legislation.

WESTERN WILDFIRES

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I will be very brief. I know we have so many important things to do dealing with this legislation, but I do wish to say something about what is going on in Nevada. We have a serious problem in Nevada, and it is fires. This is about the fourth year we have had these raging wildfires.

It is so difficult. The smoke is so thick, helicopters cannot fly. Firefighters have been lost not knowing where they are fighting these fires. It is rough terrain. What people do not understand is, Nevada—other than

Alaska—is the most mountainous State in the Union. It has 314 separate mountain ranges. We have 32 mountains over 11,000 feet high. Some of this terrain, where these fires are burning, is very difficult.

We share Lake Tahoe with California. There was a raging fire there that lasted 2 weeks. It has now been put out. But they think that at least 400 structures have burned, with 275 or 300 homes burned to the ground.

On a lot of the land in Nevada not many people live there. In spite of that, people do live there. It is rural, and fires have been raging. What has happened with the fires that have taken place in the past, we have these species that are foreign to the high deserts of Nevada. They start burning, they get into the low mountains, they get into the cedars and the pines and then start burning in the forests. That is what has happened in Nevada.

In one fire we have had three lives lost. This fire burned so quickly that three grown men could not escape the fire. They were doing work on their farm. There was an 11-year-old boy. They saw the fire coming. They said, "Run for your life," literally, and the 11-year-old boy ran and did survive. His family did not. They all died—three of them.

I say this because we have shut down roads. In one part of Utah, 100 miles of interstate were closed because of fires. Think about that: 100 miles of interstate closed. People could not go. One reason was the smoke was so thick—not the fire, the smoke.

There has been remarkable heroism, as there always is with these men and women who fight these raging fires.

I quoted, a couple weeks ago, Edward Croker, a long past fire chief in the State of New York, who said:

I have no ambition in this world but one, and that is to be a fireman. Our proudest moment is to save lives. Under the impulse of such thoughts, the nobility of the occupation thrills us and stimulates us to deeds of daring, even of supreme sacrifice.

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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The way fires are fought 100 years after this man said this is different than the way they used to be fought, but it still takes a great deal of courage and many times heroism to go forward in these areas where burning is taking place.

So far, 245 square miles in northern Nevada have burned. That is a lot of ground: 245 square miles. Some of the fires are not under control yet. So I want the RECORD to reflect we have problems in the West. Some say it is because of global warming. Whatever the reason, we have never had fires such as we have had in the last 4 years in Nevada and I think in the West, generally.

So I would finally say, long after the smoke has cleared, the accounts of bravery will still be told in Nevada.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION AMENDMENTS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, let me say briefly, the majority leader has it entirely right, we are in the process of discussing a consent agreement under which the Webb amendment would be voted upon and the alternative, which will be offered by Senator LINDSEY GRAHAM, who will be over to speak shortly.

Hopefully, we will be able to work that out and begin to make progress on the bill.

I yield the floor.

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 for 60 minutes, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, with the time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with the first half of the time under the control of the Republicans and the second half of the time under the control of the majority.

The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. LIEBERMAN. Mr. President, I believe I have been yielded 15 minutes of the next half hour.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator may proceed.

Mr. LIEBERMAN. I thank the Chair.

IRAQ

Mr. LIEBERMAN. Mr. President, I rise to speak about the pending busi-

ness before the Senate, which is the Department of Defense authorization bill for fiscal year 2008.

This is a bill the Senate Armed Services Committee has worked long and hard on over a period of several months. I am privileged to be a member of the committee and now doubly privileged to be chair of the Airland Subcommittee. I am proud of the work of the committee.

This is a bill that does the best we possibly can to support and expand our forces during a time of war. Unfortunately, most of the time that will be spent by this Chamber on this bill will not be about the solid substance of the Department of Defense authorization bill but will be on a series of amendments that will be offered to alter our course or force our withdrawal from Iraq.

In my considered opinion, respectfully, this is a mistake. These amendments regarding Iraq, I believe, are untimely, they are unwise, and they are unfair.

They are untimely in the sense that they are premature and should await September, when, as ordained by this Congress itself in the supplemental appropriations bill, General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker will come back to report to us fully.

They are unwise, if ever adopted, because they would essentially represent a retreat from Iraq, a defeat for the United States and the forces of a new Iraq, a free Iraq, and a tremendous victory for Iran and al-Qaida, who are our two most significant enemies in the world today.

Offering these amendments at this time, in my opinion, is unfair: unfair, most of all, to the 160,000 Americans in uniform over there—men and women, brave, effective, in my opinion, the new greatest generation of American soldiers, committed to this fight, believing we can win it, putting their lives on the line every day. They have made tremendous progress already in the so-called surge, counteroffensive. To snipe at them from here is, in my opinion, unfair.

That is why I will oppose all the amendments I have heard about thus far and why I wish to discuss them today.

I suppose, in terms of timeliness, if one felt the surge, counteroffensive—which began in February, and has just been fully staffed a couple of weeks ago—had absolutely failed, then one might say: OK, we won't wait until September, as we promised we would do; we will try to force a change in policy or a retreat right now. But the facts, as I will discuss, will show the surge is showing some success—in some ways some remarkable success—and does not justify these amendments of retreat being offered at this time.

Six months ago, this Chamber voted unanimously to confirm GEN David Petraeus as commander of our forces in Iraq. The fact is—which we all acknowledge—before that, the adminis-

tration had followed a strategy in Iraq that simply was not working. It was a strategy focused on keeping the U.S. force presence as small as possible, regardless of conditions on the ground, and of pushing Iraqi forces into the lead as quickly as possible, regardless of their capabilities to do so.

General Petraeus oversaw—let me step back. General Petraeus was part of a process, along with others, that presented a dramatically different strategy to the President of the United States, the Commander in Chief. He accepted that dramatically different strategy, which was to apply classic principles of counterinsurgency that have been successful elsewhere, so that instead of our main goal being to get out of Iraq, our main goal became to protect the civilian population that the terrorists were persistently attacking, bringing chaos throughout the country, including particularly in the capital city of Baghdad, and making it impossible for a new Iraqi Government to take shape.

As a result, over the past 5 months, many problems, many crises, many challenges in Iraq that had long been described as hopelessly beyond solution have begun to improve. In Baghdad, the sectarian violence that had paralyzed the city for more than a year began to drop dramatically. In Anbar Province, which the chief of Marine Corps intelligence in Iraq described 9 months ago as “lost”—and he was right at that point—a city which I was not allowed to visit when I went to Iraq in December because it was too dangerous—our surge forces have moved in effectively.

Working together with Sunni tribal leaders and their Sunni followers, we have al-Qaida on the run. As a matter of fact, they have effectively run from Anbar Province, the province they said they intended to make the capital of the new Islamist extremist Republic of Iraq.

When I was in Iraq a month ago, I was not only allowed to visit Ramadi and walk its streets but was tremendously impressed by the peace and rebirth that is occurring there.

As John Burns of the New York Times recently put it, the capital city of Anbar, Ramadi, has since “gone from being the most dangerous place in Iraq . . . to being one of the least dangerous places.” Despite these gains in Baghdad and Anbar, critics of the new strategy nonetheless insisted that it was not working, pointing to the fact that, yes, al-Qaida is on the run, but it is running and causing devastation in other parts of Iraq—now in Diyala Province, for instance.

But what happened? General Petraeus, now with the other generals and additional personnel brought under his command by the surge counteroffensive strategy, was able to leave some troops in Anbar, fortified by Iraqi security forces and the Sunni tribal forces, and move the surge forces to Diyala, to Bakuba there, where they now have al-Qaida on the run.