

the majority and minority is the majority would like to bring the troops home right now. "Enough is enough," says the majority leader.

The Republicans, on the other hand, believe we have to finish the job. And while great progress has been made as a result of the surge implemented by General Petraeus several months ago, the job is not finished. And until the job is finished, there is a great danger that were we to pull out prematurely, al-Qaida, not totally defeated, would infiltrate right back in, reestablish its presence, begin the terrorism which has taken us so many months now to repress, and that we would have to then come right back in again, all at a greater cost than if we simply see the job through right now.

It is possible every day to have a headline from a newspaper revealing a suicide bomber attack or some other incident similar to that in Iraq. That is the unfortunate reality. Everything is not yet "just fine" in Iraq. But it is also true that because the surge has worked to essentially defeat al-Qaida, it has now resorted to the most reprehensible tactics of all: using women, children, the disabled as suicide bombers to go into places where those people are not suspects and they can blow up innocent people in Iraq.

That is the situation we need to help stop, not turn our back and walk away from. It is also true many Iraqis have now been trained by our forces. That is the good news that will enable us eventually, hopefully sooner rather than later, to withdraw our troops from Iraq. We are withdrawing them now.

We will, by June as I recall, be down to a level that is very close to the level that existed prior to the surge. We will be able to do that because the surge has worked. What happens after that, we will await a report from General Petraeus when he comes back to the Capitol and briefs us on the situation in Iraq.

In the meantime, Ambassador Crocker and others have noted significant progress on the political and diplomatic front as well as the economic front in Iraq. The Parliament there is now engaging in vigorous debate, passing resolutions. I note that one was vetoed yesterday. It kind of reminds me of the process in Washington, where we do not always agree on everything and we have a robust debate about it.

We should not be critical of the Iraqis because they cannot agree always on everything, but we should continue to push them to move forward with alacrity, so the things that need to be done politically to enable us to eventually remove our troops can be done. I know we all, Republicans and Democrats, share that goal.

So the bottom line is, we will continue this debate today. I would conclude with this point: One of the important reasons for having this debate today about a strategy for dealing with al-Qaida is because there is a difference of opinion between the House of Rep-

resentatives' leadership and the Senate on this issue.

The Senate voted with 68 Senators, Democrats and Republicans, to reinstitute FISA, the law that enables us to gather intelligence on these terrorists abroad. That law had to be reauthorized because it expired 6 months after we first passed it.

So we had to reauthorize it and make one additional change; that is, to make sure the telecommunications companies that are cooperating with us are protected from lawsuits that have been filed against them simply for their participation with the U.S. Government in collecting this foreign intelligence.

Without that liability protection, they are not likely to continue to help us. So we made that change. It was recommended by the Intelligence Committee on a vote of 13 to 2, a very bipartisan recommendation. The Senate then passed it with 68 affirmative votes. It went to the House of Representatives and there it sits. It sits without a law in force today that enables us to begin new intelligence surveillance activities against terrorists abroad.

This represents a deficiency in our intelligence gathering at a time when as both Admiral McConnell, the Director of National Intelligence, and Attorney General Mukasey have noted that we are losing intelligence every day that would help us in the war against these terrorists.

Every day that goes past that we cannot intercept a communication because the law has not been reauthorized is a day of lost intelligence, intelligence we will never get back. The terrorists are not going to make the phone call a second or third time to accommodate us so we can finally collect the intelligence we need, so we can find out who he is calling and what they are planning. We cannot do that.

So phone calls that occurred yesterday or the day before or the day before that, they are gone, they are lost forever. It is critical we reestablish this capability for collecting foreign intelligence on terrorists.

The legislation passed by the Senate will do that. The President says he will sign it into law, and it is critical that the House of Representatives' leadership allow the House of Representatives to vote on it. If they do, it will pass and it can be sent to the President and it will be signed.

The reason, I gather, it has not been brought forth is because the leadership of the House knows it will pass and, for whatever reason, they do not want this Senate-passed bill to become law.

It is critical the Congress fulfill its responsibility to ensure that our intelligence-gathering capabilities continue on. I would urge again that the best strategy for dealing with al-Qaida starts with authorizing the kind of intelligence collection that we understand is critical to understanding al-Qaida's intentions and thus being able to defeat them.

So in developing a strategy for al-Qaida, No. 1, the House of Representatives' leadership should bring this legislation up for a vote, allow those who support it to send it to the President for his signature, and we can get on with this important collection.

I urge my colleagues to come to the floor and let us know when they wish to speak so we can organize the debate today with an eye toward the minority and majority leader being able to get together and work out a time schedule that would be acceptable to all of us.

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 up to 1 hour, with the time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with the majority controlling the first half and the Republicans controlling the final half.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Washington.

VETERANS CARE

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, our servicemembers in Iraq are fighting under incredibly stressful conditions each and every day. We are on the floor today talking about an Iraq resolution. We are focused on the war or the surge. I wish to talk today about the soldiers themselves who are called on. Many of them, as we know, have come home with terrible injuries that need specialized care. Yet there are too many examples that show today the Bush administration was caught unprepared to take care of these men and women when they have come home.

So as we continue to talk about Iraq, I think it is important we also talk about the toll that this war is taking on our troops and our veterans. I wish to focus today on the need to ensure that our injured servicemembers and veterans can get the care they need and deserve by reminding all of us what happened in the last year and how much we still have to do.

A year ago this month, the Washington Post published a story that uncovered the depth of the problems facing our servicemembers who were being treated at Walter Reed Army Medical Center. The Post reported then that servicemembers were living in rooms with moldy walls and broken ceilings while they waited, waited to get care. The Post found that many of our servicemembers and their families felt trapped at the time in a bureaucratic catch-22 as they fought to get the disability benefits they had earned.

The news of the extent of the squalid conditions was a watershed moment in