

They want the Senate to be a "Graveyard of Progress." They don't want us to take up this legislation. They don't want us to take up these issues. They don't want to see any change. They don't want to see any progress. That is why their message at this point is so empty. All they can do is say no, no to the issues that really count with American families.

Eventually the American people will speak, in November, in an election. They will decide whether this Republican approach of filibusters and stopping progress and stopping change is what they want to see or whether they want to bring to the Senate new people who can start moving this country forward. Eventually the American people have the last word. I am sorry we have virtually wasted a week and the time of this great institution with more Republican filibusters. But it is their strategy; it is their plan. It is the way they address the serious issues facing America.

#### WORLD FOOD CRISIS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I fear we are on the brink of a major humanitarian crisis around the world. Food prices are rising beyond the reach of people in countries as disparate and far apart as Haiti, Egypt, and Thailand. Food prices and their increase have led to demonstrations, sometimes even violent demonstrations in many parts of the world, creating real threats to the stability of those countries. As many as 33 countries face a growing risk of hunger and social unrest that is caused when people are hungry and frightened about their future. Quite simply, I am concerned that we are steps away from a world food crisis, a crisis that could have a dramatic impact on some of the world's poorest nations.

The other week, World Bank President Robert Zoellick warned:

For countries where food comprises about half to three-quarters of consumption, there is no margin for survival.

In the United States, the poorest 20 percent, the poorest one-fifth of our population, spends about 16 percent of their income on food. It is a lot compared to many of us. But in the poorest nations, those families spend more than half of what they earn to feed themselves. In Nigeria, families spend an average of 73 percent of the money they earn on food; in Vietnam, 65 percent. Even as food prices soar, humanitarian aid has been forced to scale back. In Cambodia, the World Food Program, which is largely sustained and supported by the United States, has suspended a feeding program for 500,000 schoolchildren because of food shortages. Rising food prices mean hunger, and with hunger and no real hope of ending it come panic, desperation, and, ultimately civil unrest.

At any given time, chronic hunger threatens the welfare of an estimated 850 million people in the world.

We talk a lot about the forces of extremists and terrorists and fundamentalists, how destabilizing they are with their acts of violence in countries where they kill innocent people. But I have to say, if this world food crisis continues unabated, the instability of terrorism may pale in comparison.

In Thailand, local farmers are reporting theft of their rice crops, as supplies from other countries are going down and prices are going up dramatically. Protests have turned violent in many places. In Yemen, food prices have doubled in recent months. Protests and riots there left at least 12 people dead. Protests in Cameroon earlier this year killed more than two dozen people and led to desperate attempts by the Government to raise wages and reduce customs duties on food products. Rioters in Burkina Faso looted stores and burned Government buildings. The Prime Minister of Haiti was forced to resign following days of deadly violence over rising food prices. Last weekend, a U.N. peacekeeper transporting food for his unit was dragged from his vehicle and shot execution style in the Haitian capital by protesters.

The risk of unrest is even more troubling in areas such as Darfur, where the World Food Program is feeding up to 3 million people a day. This is a humanitarian time bomb which threatens to explode at any moment.

I have seen food aid programs operate overseas, and they can make a big difference. I saw one program when I traveled to a slum in Nairobi, Kenya. It is a slum of lean-to homes where more than 600,000 people live. It is called Kibera. If you saw the movie "The Constant Gardener," much of it was filmed in the slum of Kibera in Nairobi, Kenya. Some people think up to 1 million people live there from time to time, some 600,000. Nobody even knows.

When you visit there, there are people as far as the eye can see—kids playing in the streets, in the filth, in railway yards, everywhere.

But when I visited there, there was a scene that was almost hard to believe. It was near the holiday season. The local schools were on vacation, but they asked the students to come back to greet this Senator who was coming from America. About 40 or 50 children put on their uniforms, left their vacation time at home, to come back to school. It wasn't to see me; believe me. It was because they promised them that if they would come back to school that day, they would feed them. The feeding program in that little school is part of what is known as the McGovern-Dole school feeding program, named after two former great Senators who served from South Dakota and Kansas.

I saw the way that food program worked. There was a noon lunch which consisted of a pot of boiling cereal. It looked a lot like oatmeal or some form of porridge. They ladled it into plastic cups. The kids stood in line like they

were at Baskin Robbins in Springfield, IL, hoping to get a double-dip ice cream cone. They were so excited to get something to eat. It was the only meal they were going to have that day. They were willing to put up with this politician, wear their uniforms, come in from vacation, on the chance they could fill that cup. They stood there and waited, just to get one meal.

The World Food Program has issued an extraordinary emergency appeal because food programs like that one in Kenya may not last. There is a shortfall of some \$500 million in food programs across the world. Considering the high cost of food and fuel prices to transport it, the shortfall is no surprise. But it requires immediate action. The U.S. contribution to the World Food Program is important because it doesn't just feed hungry kids. It tells the world who we are.

Right now there are people who are not our friends, who are in fact our enemies, who are advertising against the United States. On television sets and other places around the world, there is an image of America that is not even close to the truth. They suggest that we are warmongers and selfish people. We are not.

We have to prove to the world again that our values count, and we will stand behind them. This global food crisis is the kind of challenge that gives us our opportunity.

It also is important to quell the growing security concerns attached with a global food crisis. Senators JOHN KERRY and JOE BIDEN joined me today in sending a letter to President Bush urging him to support additional funding for food aid in the fiscal year 2008 supplemental appropriations bill. The President is going to come to us shortly and ask for \$108 billion to continue the war in Iraq and in Afghanistan. He will tell us this is an emergency. The world food crisis is also an emergency. It is one we should deal with. If we are really focused on stability and peace in Iraq, we should not ignore the fact that the shortages of food and hunger around the world can lead to instability in many other places.

As a first step, the Department of Agriculture has committed to providing \$200 million in emergency food assistance through the Bill Emerson humanitarian trust. Bill Emerson, former Republican Congressman from the Boothill area of Missouri, was a fine fellow. I got to know him when I served in the House. He really cared about children and feeding people. So \$200 million in his name is certainly money well spent.

Moving forward, though, we have to understand that is not enough. We are going to need to add more to make sure this crisis doesn't occur.

We can share our bountiful harvest. We can help the poorest people in the world. We can demonstrate in that way the finest elements of the American spirit.

We recently had a hearing, in fact yesterday, before the Senate Appropriations Committee, where Jim Nussle, who is chairman of the Office of Management and Budget, spoke. Jim comes from the State of Iowa. He is a former Congressman, former chairman of the House Budget Committee.

I asked him about this. I asked him if the administration would consider, as part of their supplemental appropriations bill, including more money for this global food crisis. I am afraid Mr. Nussle was adamant in saying they would not. They would not consider adding any money to the \$108 billion for the war in Iraq and Afghanistan. He said that is all the President has asked for.

I hope Mr. Nussle will reconsider. I certainly hope the President will reconsider. What is at issue is not a political fight. What is at issue is a fight for food so some of the poorest people on Earth can survive. The United States will have a chance to demonstrate to the world our values and what we stand for. I hope we can do that by adding to this supplemental funding bill enough money to provide assistance to people around the world who face deprivation and starvation because of the current global food crisis.

#### MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

LANCE CORPORAL THOMAS P. ECHOLS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I rise today because a brave man from Kentucky has fallen in the far-away country of Iraq. LCpl Thomas P. Echols was tragically killed on December 4, 2006, during combat operations in the city of Ramadi. The Shepherdsville, KY, native was 20 years old.

Lance Corporal Echols was serving his second deployment in Iraq. For his valor as a U.S. Marine, he received several medals, awards, and decorations, including the National Defense Service Medal, the Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal, and the Purple Heart.

Raised in Shepherdsville, in Bullitt County, Tom was actually born in Mount Clemens, MI, and as a result Tom brought with him to Kentucky a fast and true love for his University of Michigan Wolverines. His grandfather, Don Wight, still recalls how his grandson once saved up money for weeks to buy tickets to a University of Michigan football game.

"I'm an MSU grad, he's a dyed-in-the-wool University of Michigan fan. Anything he could find that was U of M memorabilia, he had it," says Don. "He

was just a good, fun-loving young man." Despite the longstanding rivalry between the University of Michigan and Michigan State, Tom and his grandfather went to that Wolverines football game together.

While Tom's eyes looked north to his beloved Wolverines, his feet were firmly planted in Kentucky. He attended Cedar Grove Elementary School, Bernheim Middle School, and Bullitt Central High School, all in Shepherdsville. He graduated from Riverview High School in Shepherdsville in 2004.

Growing up, Tom belonged to his school's football and track teams. He played video games and paintball. And in high school he participated in Junior ROTC and the drill team, perhaps preparing himself for the military life he hoped would lie ahead.

Tom chose to pursue service in uniform by the time high school graduation rolled around. His father, Kurt Echols, remembers his son thinking of a career in the Armed Forces as early as middle school. Perhaps Tom drew inspiration from his father, a veteran himself.

Tom "was a good kid, loved sports, a big Michigan fan," Kurt says of his son, and remembers him as someone who always enjoyed a good joke.

In the fall of 2004, Tom enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps. He was a member of the 1st Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division from Camp Lejeune, NC, and during his deployment to Iraq, his regiment fell under the command of the First Marine Expeditionary Force, Forward.

Tom's longtime friend Tim Zamboroski was sorry to see the childhood buddy he had grown up with whisked away to the other side of the world. As kids, Tom and Tim used to play baseball together in the backyard. As men, they would trade e-mails back and forth from America to Iraq.

"I think he was pretty happy with serving the country," Tim says. "I'm going to miss him." When he heard Tom had been killed, Tim says he felt as if he had lost a brother.

Lance Corporal Echols drove humvees during his first tour in Iraq, and by his second tour had become an infantryman.

While serving in the Marine Corps, he also became a husband, after asking Allyson Echols, whom he met in high school, to marry him.

Tom and Allyson married during the week of Thanksgiving in 2005. Allyson now raises the couple's young daughter, Julia, who sadly never got to meet her father.

Tom was buried at the Zachary Taylor National Cemetery in Louisville, KY, with full military honors. A large crowd of people came to pay their final respects. Sheriffs from both Bullitt County and neighboring Jefferson County were there, and Tom's father Kurt remembers with pride that members of a local fire department erected a large American flag in honor of his son.

Our prayers are with the family of Lance Corporal Echols today as God comforts them for their tragic loss. We are thinking of his wife Allyson; his daughter Julia; his parents Kurt and Rose; his sister Rebecca; his brother Alexander; his grandparents Jerry and Sharon Echols and Donald and Mary Wight; and many other beloved family members and friends.

This U.S. Senate expresses its deepest gratitude for LCpl Thomas P. Echols's life of service. And we express our deepest gratitude for the Echols family, for nurturing this man, patriot, and marine who answered the call in his country's time of need.

#### WEEK OF THE YOUNG CHILD

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I wish to recognize the Week of the Young Child, taking place this week, April 13 through 19.

Sponsored by the National Association for the Education of Young Children, the Week of the Young Child is held annually to honor young children and those who make a difference in their lives. This year's theme is "Bring Communities Together for Children—Children Bring Communities Together". This week presents an opportunity for us all to focus on the needs of the 20 million young children around the country. It shines a light on the importance of issues like affordable childcare for working families, access to quality early childhood educational programs, and the availability of adequate health care.

As a father and a grandfather, I am troubled by the fact that so many young children in this country live with the effects of poverty and inadequate health and child care every day. It is estimated that 24 percent of American children under the age of 6 live in poverty and 24 percent of those children are without health insurance. In addition, although nearly 50 percent of working families rely on outside childcare, fees for these programs are skyrocketing, leaving them out of reach for too many. The Week of the Young Child highlights the role of the Federal, State, and local governments, as well as private organizations and the general public, in alleviating these problems and working toward a stronger, healthier community.

The Week of the Young Child also gives us an opportunity to recognize and celebrate the programs and organizations that provide vital services to young children and their families. For example, the Head Start Program provides comprehensive early education and health services to almost 1 million low-income preschool children to help them prepare for and succeed in school.

Additionally, the Child Care and Development Block Grant, CCDBG, provides funding to States for childcare services for low-income families and activities intended to improve the overall quality and supply of childcare. For families transitioning to financial