

Reconciliation Act of 2005 (Public Law 109-171), by the College Cost Reduction and Access Act (Public Law 110-84), or by the Ensuring Continued Access to Student Loans Act of 2008 (Public Law 110-227) to the provisions of the Higher Education Act of 1965 and the Taxpayer-Teacher Protection Act of 2004.

#### SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I just finished a meeting to try to lay out to a number of Senators what we are going to be doing on the supplemental appropriations bill. It is going to be extremely difficult for us to get from where we are today to completing this legislation in a timely fashion. There are some very complicated issues, some very strong feelings by a lot of different Senators.

As highly controversial as is this war and this war funding, we are going to have to work together; otherwise, we are going to walk away from here this week with nothing done. That, I assume, is one alternative. It is not one I think most want, but that is an alternative.

The other problem we have, because of longstanding commitments, including the wedding of one of our Members, is we are going to start losing Senators very quickly. Because of that, there are two Senators who are going to leave sometime Thursday. They will not be here. We have, of course, Presidentials out in the country someplace. We are going to have to try to figure out when they need to be here. Senator KENNEDY is still having tests run to determine when he can return.

So, to make a long story really short, we have a complicated path to completing our work, and we have to try to figure out a way to do the budget in this time period also.

So, Mr. President, I wish I could tell Members to just take it easy, everybody can leave, but I think what we are coming to is we are going to have to finish our work Thursday or this war funding bill will not be completed. That may not be the case; maybe we can work with less than 100 Senators trying to get it done, but it is not an easy chore. It is one that is necessary but difficult.

#### RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

#### DEFENSE SUPPLEMENTAL SPENDING

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, the supplemental spending request that was sent to Congress last year by the President was unambiguous: the funds were to be spent on forces in the field, on the men and women fighting in Afghanistan and Iraq, and on their families here at home.

Last week, the Democratic leadership of the House showed us what they

thought of that request. They took it up, hollowed it out, and filled the shell with a raft of unrelated domestic spending projects and policy proposals that did not include a dime for the troops in the field. House Democrats took a request meant for the troops and used it to fuel their own domestic spending habits. Then they sent this piece of legislation over to the Senate on the eve of Memorial Day and told us to vote for it. The Senate was being asked to vote not on troop funding but on two other amendments. One included unemployment benefits and a Medicaid proposal. The other sought to undermine the constitutional powers of the Commander in Chief by proposing a withdrawal date from Iraq.

Unfortunately, our Democratic friends in the Senate made it even worse. Taking up what they got from the House, they added even more unrelated policy proposals. In the name of combat readiness, Senate Democrats also sought to restrict the ability of our military commanders to deploy forces, ignoring the fact that the surest way to degrade troop readiness is to delay the delivery of funds that are used to prepare and train our forces in the first place.

Taken together, it seems the only issue unaddressed by the Democratic leadership in the House and Senate is the only one that matters: how and when we will fund our forces in the field.

The bottom line is this: Tasked with the responsibility of funding our forces in the field, Democrats in the House and Senate neglected that task in favor of domestic spending and freelance policy proposals that we know in the end will not be signed into law—this despite the fact that the House will soon take up the Defense authorization bill, which is ordinarily the vehicle for the kind of policy proposals our friends on the other side have included in the supplemental spending request. The House has failed in its basic responsibility. It is my hope the Senate will do better.

While some of our friends on the other side seem to be counting on the fact that most Americans are distracted by the ongoing Presidential contest, the families and friends of U.S. soldiers and marines who are fighting overseas are, indeed, paying attention.

The President sent a request to fund these men and women. As long as they remain in harm's way, we have a strict obligation to give them what they need. On this point, there really should not even be a debate. The Senate must pass a bill funding our troops free of restrictions on their ability to win and free of spending unrelated to their mission. And we must try to do it by Memorial Day. In less than a month, the Defense Department will be unable to make payroll for our uniformed Army unless Congress approves the President's supplemental spending request. Less than a month after that, funds for operations and maintenance will also run dry. It may be convenient for those

focused on the political calendar to ignore these pressing needs, but ignoring them really does not make them go away.

I hope the Senate will do its duty this week. The majority leader just indicated it is challenging. Of course, it is always challenging to do that. But we need to do our duty this week. Our forces in Baghdad and Ramadi will not be taking a week off for a recess.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

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

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I say respectfully to my friend that the logic of his statement is really without foundation. Keep in mind, the complaint he has is the House sent us a bill that did not have war funding in it. Bingo. Why? Because 132 Republicans walked out—did not vote. One hundred thirty-two Republicans in the House did not vote for war funding. Don't blame it on the Democrats. Had 132 Republicans voted, there would have been war funding. But they decided not to vote.

So don't blame the House for sending us only conditional aspects of the war and sending us some other things, like the GI bill of rights. We have funded this war on borrowed money, spending \$5,000 a second on this war—borrowed money. The House made a decision. They said: Well, don't you think it is a good idea we spend some money on the troops coming home, as we did in World War II, so they can get an education? This bill, written by JIM WEBB, was adopted by the House overwhelmingly. And they did something else: It is paid for, not like the war. The war is not paid for. The GI bill of rights is paid for, as we have it.

So, Mr. President, I know we have a difficult road ahead of us because we do not have war funding in this bill because the Republicans in the House did not vote for it. Don't blame it on the House Democrats. There were enough of them to get a majority to do it. The Republicans walked out.

But I say, Mr. President, is it any wonder that the House Republicans have lost three special elections in districts that are overwhelmingly Republican? In Illinois, the former Speaker of the House, Dennis Hastert's district—they lost that. They lost a seat in a special election in Louisiana that was a slam dunk Republican district. And then in Mississippi, they lost one. Is it any wonder when they do tricks like this: "Democrats didn't fund the war"? "Well, don't check too closely because 132 of us just walked out and didn't vote."

So I am here, Mr. President. We are going to go to this bill this afternoon. I spoke briefly to the distinguished Republican leader yesterday. We are going to have to try to figure out some way to work together to get votes. At the end of the day, we will see what happens. In the past, war funding has been—after a lot of arm-twisting and cajoling, there have been enough votes