

of Kwethluk—passed away before he could see this issue resolved. I ask my colleagues for their continued support to ensure that the now 25 Alaskan Natives who defended this Nation receive their earned pension by supporting the provisions in the National Defense Authorization Act and Defense Appropriations Act for fiscal year 2010.

I also join my colleague Senator MURKOWSKI in asking the administration to reexamine their objection to restoring the retirement payments and honoring our World War II veterans. Our time is running short to correct this injustice and restore these modest payments. The Federal Government turned its back on these men at the end of the war. I hope Congress and my colleagues in the Senate won't let that happen.

I yield the remainder of my time.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2010

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 3326, which the clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 3326) making appropriations for the Department of Defense for fiscal year ending September 30, 2010, and for other purposes.

Pending:

McCain amendment No. 2575, to provide for testimony before Congress on the additional forces and resources required to meet United States objectives with respect to Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Michigan.

Mr. LEVIN. Madam President, I believe that the McCain amendment is the pending amendment. We will be offering or suggesting that a unanimous consent agreement be entered into where an amendment of mine could be voted upon side by side with the amendment, with the vote on mine occurring first, under the traditions of the Senate. We are trying to see if we can enter into a time agreement.

I believe our staff is working on a unanimous consent agreement that would allow for that to happen pending the offering and acceptance of that, hopefully.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. McCAIN. Madam President, may I say through the Chair to my friend, the distinguished chairman, I understand there will be side-by-side amendments. I would be glad to enter into a time agreement that is agreeable to the chairman, and not an extended length of time—it is not a complicated issue—and then votes on both side-by-sides. I hope we could announce that

agreement shortly, and I thank the chairman for his courtesy.

We are discussing now two amendments, as I understand it, and both of them call for testimony before Congress on meeting the United States objectives on Afghanistan and Pakistan. Many of us have been very concerned about the fact that we have not heard from General McChrystal and General Petraeus on this issue of our strategic policy in Afghanistan, and of course most importantly the disposition or dispatch, I might say, of American troops, and increasing American troops to Afghanistan to implement the strategy that, according to Admiral Mullen, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, was agreed upon last March.

I must say, without mentioning any classified information, the briefing that I attended yesterday with General Jones doesn't seem to corroborate that statement by Admiral Mullen. But the point is we need to hear from the architects and the commanders.

If the President does not want to talk to the commander in the field, General McChrystal very often—in fact, it was reported in a “60 Minutes” interview that he gave he said he had spoken to the President once in 70 days, although the President talks to labor leaders almost on a daily basis pushing his health care agenda—the fact is we as Members of Congress, a coequal branch of government, also have a responsibility in this decision-making process.

I respect the President's role as Commander in Chief. I respect the President of the United States making a decision. But I also cherish the role of the Senate and House of Representatives in being informed as to the views of our military commanders in whom we place the responsibility for the lives of our young men and women who are in harm's way.

All we are seeking with this amendment is a date certain, not immediately—the date for this requirement of testimony by General McChrystal, General Petraeus, General Stavridis and perhaps others if necessary—by November 15. That is a month and a half from now. Should not we hear a month and a half from now, within a month and a half, as to what we are considering? I hope the decision would be made clear.

Admiral Mullen, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, in testimony said:

The President has given us a clear mission: disrupt, dismantle and defeat al Qaida . . .

But the President, in March, said of the situation—the President of the United States said the situation there was “increasingly perilous and that the future of this troubled nation is inextricably linked to the future of its neighbor Pakistan.” He also called it a “war of necessity,” and declared “America must no longer deny resources to Afghanistan.”

Obviously I agree with him. Time after time I have made my commitment of willingness and desire to work

with him. But it is very difficult for members of the Armed Services Committee and Members of the Senate to work with him if we are not informed by the uniformed commanders in the field. Admiral Mullen, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, emphasized in testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee, time is not on our side. There are already somewhere between 62,000 and 68,000 American troops in the field in danger. Tragically, casualties have gone up. We have a responsibility also. We have a responsibility to hear from our commanders in the field.

Let me point out, General McChrystal was on “60 Minutes” talking about what we needed to do in Afghanistan. General McChrystal gave a speech in London just yesterday talking about what we needed to do. So it is OK with the administration for General McChrystal to go on “60 Minutes.” It is OK for him to give a speech at the Institute for Strategic Studies in London. But the administration does not want General McChrystal and General Petraeus before the Senate Armed Services Committee. How does that work?

I hope my colleagues will vote for my amendment, which calls for the same, basically, testimony by the commander of the United States Central Command, commander of the United States European Command, and Supreme Allied Commander—Europe, Commander of the United States Forces—Afghanistan, and of course we would like to hear from the United States Ambassador to Afghanistan, Ambassador Eikenberry.

This is pretty clear. This is a very clear decision we have to make. We are asking that within a month and a half from now these individuals appear before the respective committees and testify as to what they believe the best strategy is to be employed in order to achieve victory. Why should not the Senate and the Congress and the people of the United States hear, directly in testimony before the Congress, what they believe is the best way to ensure victory in Afghanistan?

I understand the debate that is going on within the White House and the deliberations that the President is undertaking as he considers the most heavy responsibility that any President has, and that is to send our young men and women into harm's way. I have some sympathy. But I would point out there are already close to 68,000 young Americans there, and casualties are going up.

According to Admiral Mullen, according to every expert, the situation is deteriorating in Afghanistan, so this should not and must not be a leisurely exercise. Decisions have to be made and we—I speak for myself and I am sure all of my colleagues—we want to be part of that decisionmaking. We do not want to make that decision because that is the responsibility of the President of the United States, but it