

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair recognizes the Senator from Louisiana.

Ms. LANDRIEU. Thank you, Mr. President. I rise today, along with my colleagues, in support of S. 4, the Soldiers', Sailors', Airmen's and Marines' Bill of Rights Act. Our military has the finest hardware and equipment in the world, but, as any general or admiral will tell you, the real source of America's strength is America's fighting men and women. We spend billions of dollars to train and equip our troops. I believe the investment has paid off, but we have neglected one very important aspect of this equation. As we now have an all-volunteer force, our training and weapons will be wasted if we cannot keep quality personnel in our Armed Forces.

Everyone has seen, I think, the recent press accounts about the personnel shortfalls, particularly in the Navy and Air Force. The discussion in the Washington Post about the status of the U.S.S. *Harry Truman*, our newest aircraft carrier, provided dramatic evidence of how deep this crisis has grown in our inability to man this vessel.

Fortunately, the Senate is able to act now to begin to reverse this trend. S. 4 provides us with a very significant across-the-board minimum pay increase of 4.8 percent. In addition, there will be other increases staggered on top of this targeted to specific areas of the military.

As Secretary Cohen has stated, I do not believe we can pay our troops too much, but I do believe we can pay them too little. That is the state we find ourselves in today. In a booming economy, Mr. President, with low unemployment, our well-trained soldiers and sailors can walk off a base and often double their salary for less work. It has made retention very difficult, and we are taking a great stride in alleviating the situation with S. 4.

The value of this bill is not just in the actual pay increase, it is also an important gesture that tells our fighting men and women that their Government cares about their well-being and appreciates the very difficult task that we ask them to perform and we are hearing them loudly and clearly.

We will keep in mind that pay increases alone, however, cannot solve this problem, as many of my colleagues have said earlier this morning. The military will never be competitive with the private sector on a dollar-for-dollar basis.

My friend, Senator CLELAND from Georgia, made a similar remark in committee the other day that stuck with me. I think he was quoting someone else, but he said the armed services may recruit a soldier, but we retain a family. And that is so true.

When we talk about keeping our troops in the service, we have to remember that the quality-of-life issues

for the family is really the core issue—soldiers wanting to be good spouses, soldiers wanting to be good parents, soldiers wanting to have a good quality of life for their family.

So while pay is certainly part of the equation, it also extends to housing, medical care, education benefits for spouses and children, day care, operations tempo, and a myriad of other issues that make up a family's quality of life. There is still much to do. This bill is only a beginning, but it is a good step.

One of the important steps taken in this bill—and it is quite innovative and I thank, again, the Senator from Georgia for bringing this up in committee—is that we will allow military personnel to transfer their Montgomery GI bill benefits to their spouses or dependents. For midcareer, officer or enlisted person, the knowledge that their children will have access to a quality education by enabling them to use their benefits is a smart incentive and one that is cost effective for us. It is an example of how we can tailor our benefits in a way that meets the needs of precisely the kind of people we want to retain.

I also believe it is very important for us to remember the contribution of our Guard and Reserve forces in these discussions. For this reason, I have a series of amendments that address some of the inequity between the benefits programs for our regulars and the Guard and the Reserve units.

With a leaner military, Mr. President, we cannot perform the complex missions of our military without a strong Guard and strong Reserve component. We must always keep our eyes on this reality when addressing retention issues.

I am proud of the statement that the Senate is making with this legislation. I commend our chairman and our ranking member for bringing this bill to the floor this early in this Congress. I hope that this will not be the end of our work, but rather a strong beginning, a bipartisan beginning. I look forward to working with my colleagues on the committee to make the real difference in the quality of life for America's military personnel.

I thank you, Mr. President.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will now stand in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, at 12:08 p.m., the Senate recessed until 2:16 p.m.; whereupon, the Senate reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. INHOFE).

SOLDIERS', SAILORS', AIRMEN'S AND MARINES' BILL OF RIGHTS ACT OF 1999

The Senate continued with the consideration of the bill.

AMENDMENT NO. 9

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question occurs on agreeing to amendment No. 9 offered by the Senator from Idaho. The yeas and nays have not been ordered.

Mr. WARNER addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia.

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I thank the Chair.

The order provides that at 2:30 we will proceed to a vote. But it also provided for the opportunity for anyone to express, through an objection, such concerns as they may have. I suggest perhaps just a minute or two here before we commence. And I say to the Chair, it is our expectation this vote will go forward, but I do want to protect the rights, for 1 minute, of those who might wish to come forward.

I am informed that the Democratic caucus is still in progress; is that it? I think it has broken up now. We are ready on this side. Mr. President, I am informed that we are ready to go.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair thanks the Senator.

Mr. WARNER. I just wanted to protect the rights of others.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question occurs on agreeing to amendment No. 9 offered by the Senator from Idaho.

Mr. WARNER. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There is a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question occurs on agreeing to amendment No. 9. The yeas and nays have been ordered. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. GORTON (when his name was called). Present.

Mr. NICKLES. I announce that the Senator from Alabama (Mr. SHELBY) is necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 87, nays 11, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 20 Leg.]

YEAS—87

Abraham	Cleland	Hagel
Akaka	Cochran	Harkin
Allard	Collins	Hatch
Ashcroft	Conrad	Helms
Baucus	Coverdell	Hollings
Bayh	Craig	Hutchinson
Bennett	Crapo	Hutchison
Biden	Daschle	Inhofe
Bingaman	DeWine	Inouye
Bond	Domenici	Jeffords
Boxer	Dorgan	Johnson
Breaux	Durbin	Kennedy
Brownback	Edwards	Kerrey
Bryan	Enzi	Kerry
Bunning	Feinstein	Kohl
Burns	Fitzgerald	Landrieu
Byrd	Frist	Lautenberg
Campbell	Graham	Leahy
Chafee	Gramm	Levin