

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 to get that. I don't know if the votes are here this time, but we certainly recognize that we have an issue, and we are going to do the best we can with my friend, the distinguished senior Senator from Kentucky, to see what we can do to get to a point where we have this war funding over with until sometime next June. If we can't get it done, then we are going to have to worry about what we do in the next month, as he said, but hopefully we can complete it this week.

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

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, one additional word. The process for doing this has been offensive, I know, both in the House and in the Senate. It is my understanding that what will happen later this week is the tree will be filled and cloture will be filed. If any amendments are allowed on the floor of the Senate, it will be because my good friend, the majority leader, decided to let us have a vote. The whole process is one that doesn't immediately engender a great level of cooperation.

Having said that, the underlying legislation is important, and hopefully somehow we will find our way through this process this week, but I think it is pretty safe to say that 49 Republicans of the U.S. Senate are going to insist on being an important part of the process. Hopefully, we will be able to sort all that out and work our way through it and get this important piece of legislation out of the Senate and on the way, at least, back to the House or, hopefully, if we are lucky, back to the President for signature.