

may be responsible for how long we have had to stay in Iraq and the problems we now face. Congress—us—we need to look at that and we need to hold people accountable.

Unfortunately, this pattern and practice of political favoritism within the administration extends beyond Iraq to how the Bush administration handles Government contracts here at home. Just last week, we got new evidence that a member of the President's Cabinet has made a series of statements that highlighted the importance of politics in awarding Government contracts in his agency.

In May, I asked the Inspector General at HUD to look into Secretary Alphonso Jackson's public statements that he deliberately denied a contract to a firm that had been critical of President Bush. Now, last week, the IG sent me the results of that investigation. This report is 340 pages long, with hundreds of pages of sworn testimony from dozens of HUD officials. This report includes sworn statements from HUD personnel, stating that Secretary Jackson told his staff to monitor the political affiliation of contract competitors and consider those affiliations in the awarding of contracts.

Secretary Jackson said that a HUD contractor had strong political affiliations that were not supportive of the President, and the Secretary said he did not want the contractor to receive any additional HUD contracts. As a result, the contractor's award was subjected to an unusual extent of delay and review.

So we have a Cabinet Secretary telling his staff to issue contracts based on politics, not based on who can do the best job for us, the American taxpayers. It is true that, in looking at the record, the Justice Department concluded:

that no apparent criminal violation could be discerned based on evidence to date.

But the Justice Department came to that conclusion only because HUD staff actually ignored the Secretary's inappropriate instructions.

When you combine what has been going on at HUD with what happened at the CPA in Iraq and reports about similar issues at the Department of the Interior, it is clear that this Congress—all of us—needs to demand accountability.

That is why, last week, I wrote to White House Chief of Staff Josh Bolten and urged him to take immediate steps to ensure that political favoritism and discrimination do not play a role in Federal contracts.

I recognize we cannot rely on the White House Chief of Staff to clean up the Bush administration, which brings me to my final point this morning.

We need real oversight. In this Congress, there has been very little oversight of this administration. The President has basically had free reign because of this Republican-controlled Congress, and we have failed to do the job in asking tough questions and demanding answers.

Norman Ornstein is an expert on Congress at the conservative American Enterprise Institute, and he said this Congress is the worst he has seen in terms of oversight.

He told the Philadelphia Inquirer:

These people have long thought of themselves as foot soldiers in the President's army, and their view is that oversight is something to avoid, lest they find something that might embarrass the administration. I don't see a single sign that this attitude will substantially change.

That was congressional expert Norman Ornstein on the Republican failure to oversee the Bush administration.

Democrats are trying to provide the oversight that Republicans so far have been unwilling to provide. On Monday, in fact, the Democratic Policy Committee held a hearing on preparations for the war in Iraq. Retired military leaders at that hearing told us that the Bush administration failed to plan for the war and that the administration misled the American people.

We had to hold those hearings under a policy committee banner because Republicans would not hold real committee oversight hearings. We have to have oversight here, no matter what the administration is, Republican or Democratic, so that we as Members of this body who represent people across the country can learn the facts and we can fix things that are not going well. That is our job. If we never have real hearings, if we never demand real accountability, well, we will never get good results.

I believe America can do a lot better. I believe we can be more secure. I believe our troops can be safer. But it has to start with the truth, not rosy predictions of how things will be, not declarations of will that gloss over the facts on the ground, not corruption in politics holding back progress. Simply the truth. And, so far, this Congress has been unwilling to let our citizens learn the truth.

I think the American people deserve better, and I hope each one of us goes home and thinks about what our responsibility is to the people we represent and to the future of this country.

Madam President, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. THUNE) Without objection, it is so ordered.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, for the information of our colleagues, we will engage in a unanimous consent request which will set out the activity for the afternoon and possibly early evening on the Supreme Court Hamdan decision.

I ask unanimous consent that the cloture motion with respect to amendment No. 5036 be withdrawn, and that further, the cloture vote scheduled in relation to H.R. 6061 be delayed to occur following the disposition of S. 3930, and that the Senate now proceed to the consideration of Calendar No. 634, S. 3930, relating to military tribunals; provided further, that the substitute amendment, the text of which is at the desk, be considered and agreed to as original text for the purpose of further amendment; provided further, that the only other amendments in order, other than any managers' amendments which are to be cleared by both managers and the two leaders, be the following:

Levin, substitute; Rockefeller, congressional oversight; Kennedy, interrogation; Byrd, sunset; Specter, habeas.

I further ask unanimous consent that the listed amendments be limited to 60 minutes equally divided between the two leaders or their designees, other than the Specter amendment and the Levin amendment which will be limited to 2 hours equally divided, as stated above, and that there be 3 hours for general debate equally divided, again, between the two leaders or their designees. I further ask unanimous consent that following the disposition of the above amendments and the use or yielding back of time, the bill be read a third time and the Senate proceed to a vote on passage, with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. REID. Reserving the right to object, Mr. President, this is in keeping with our agreement. I wanted the record to reflect—in case Senator LEAHY is watching us because he wanted to make sure he would have 45 minutes on his amendments and 15 minutes on the bill—it is my understanding Senator SPECTER will be giving him 15 minutes of his time, but if he doesn't, I will take it from the bill. So Senator LEAHY will have his 45 minutes, 15 minutes on this bill.

So I think this is an opportunity to improve this bill. We would all like to have had more time for hearings and debate on the floor, but we are where we are. I am thankful and grateful that we have an opportunity to improve this bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I will have an opening statement on the bill. But what we have done is set out, with a time agreement, a way to address a very important piece of legislation. I appreciate the Democratic leader and his caucus, our leadership and our caucus all agreeing upon this outline of how we will address an issue that will make us safer and more secure.

We will turn to the bill, and then I will make an opening statement, and then we will start right in with the amendment process following my opening remarks.