

was General Abizaid. Now General Abizaid is going to retire. He not only speaks the language, he has been involved in that region of the world for years, yet his advice is no longer going to be sought. That, to me, is a mistake.

What is at stake is the entire region with the Iranian ascendancy. What is at stake is the more than 140,000 American troops who are there now and all of those who will be rotated there in the future. What is at stake in the Middle East and central Asia is a part of the world of enormous importance to the United States.

It is hard to talk about this very difficult condition the United States is facing without also saying there is another policy we clearly ought to look at in order to make some changes to lessen our dependence on that part of the world in the future, and that is energy independence. If we did not have to import 60 percent of our daily consumption of oil from places such as the Persian Gulf region or Nigeria or Venezuela, wouldn't the defense outlook for the United States and the way we would approach our foreign policy in different parts of the world be considerably different and a lot easier for the United States?

As we eagerly anticipate the President's comments and his report on his new policy, let's understand there is not a new policy. There has not been a policy in the past. The idea that this surge of troops is a new policy is not new. We tried that before a couple of years ago and it did not work. It did not work because of the longstanding violence and hatred between those two groups of Islam which goes back to the 1600s, when the two brands of Islam started separating, and what ultimately came to be the Shiites separated from the Sunnis after the death of Mohammed. A separation, with the two sides wanting revenge is how this has played out over the years. It is still going on.

We have enormous stakes. We hope we can get it right. It is with a great deal of anticipation that I look forward to the Senate receiving the President's comments.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

(The remarks of Ms. STABENOW pertaining to the death of President Gerald R. Ford are printed in today's RECORD under "Morning Business.")

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

AUTHORIZING SALARY ADJUSTMENTS FOR JUSTICES AND JUDGES OF THE UNITED STATES

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. 197, which was introduced earlier today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows: A bill (S. 197) to authorize salary adjustments for justices and judges of the United States for fiscal year 2007.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I thank Senator REID for expediting passage of legislation I introduced today with him and Senators SPECTER, REID, FEINSTEIN, and CORNYN to authorize cost-of-living adjustments for the salaries of United States Justices and judges for fiscal year 2007. This is a step I supported taking—and that we should have taken—in the last Congress. I am glad that a holdup on the Republican side that prevented us from passing this last week was resolved so that we could move forward in a unanimous and bipartisan way to take care of this unfinished business in the Senate. I hope that the House of Representatives will join us in making cost-of-living increase for judges an early item of business.

The legislation we pass today is a modest step towards addressing the issues raised by Chief Justice Roberts in his "Year End Report on the Federal Judiciary." I have commended the Chief Justice for speaking out on behalf of the judiciary and for seeking to strengthen the independence of the judicial branch. Judicial independence is critical for preserving our system of government and protecting the rights of all Americans.

In 1975, Congress enacted the Executive Salary Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act, intended to give judges, Members of Congress and other high-ranking executive branch officials automatic COLAs as accorded other Federal employees unless rejected by Congress. In 1981, Congress enacted section 140 of Public Law 97-92, mandating specific congressional action to give COLAs to judges. With the end of the last Congress, however, the continuing resolutions providing funding failed to suspend section 140, thus ensuring that no COLA would be provided for Federal judges during the current fiscal year, unless other action is taken. Four years ago, the last time Congress missed making a scheduled cost-of-living adjustment for the judiciary, I sponsored remedial legislation that was enacted. I have done so, again, in the hope that Congress will correct this slight.

The bipartisan legislation we pass today provides for a COLA for Federal judges consistent with the law and with fairness. I have worked hard as ranking member of the Judiciary Committee over the last 4 years to ensure the independence of the judiciary.

Some of us have tried over the years to improve the compensation of judges. I have sponsored bills for general increases in judicial compensation. One such measure did pass the Senate a few years ago only to be stalled by the Republican House leadership. Senator FEINSTEIN was the lead sponsor of such a bill last Congress.

I intend to do what I can to convince Congress to fairly evaluate this issue and the Chief Justice's arguments, so that we can see what solutions may be possible. I hope Congress and the President will reconsider a broader judicial compensation measure this year to adjust their salaries. We have taken a first step now by taking up and passing this bill allowing for the annual judicial COLA that was not enacted last year.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the bill be read a third time, passed, and the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table; that any statements related to this bill be printed in the RECORD. I also indicate this matter has been cleared with Senator MCCONNELL.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The bill (S. 197) was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed, as follows:

S. 197

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. AUTHORIZATION OF SALARY ADJUSTMENTS FOR FEDERAL JUSTICES AND JUDGES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Pursuant to section 140 of Public Law 97-92, justices and judges of the United States are authorized during fiscal year 2007 to receive a salary adjustment in accordance with section 461 of title 28, United States Code.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This Act shall take effect as of January 1, 2007.

HONEST LEADERSHIP ACT

Mr. REID. Mr. President, tomorrow morning the Senate will begin the hard work of moving our country forward with S. 1. S. 1 is the ethics, lobbying, earmark reform legislation that will be before this body tomorrow.

After a long time, it seems, the new Senate has been sworn in. Our 10 new colleagues are here. Today we govern, and we start with S. 1. It is called the Legislative Transparency and Accountability Act. When passed, this legislation will help ensure America has a government as good and as honest as the people whom it serves. I want the record to be spread with my appreciation for Senator MCCONNELL cosponsoring this legislation. As the Chair knows and has worked so hard to promote bipartisanship, we cannot accomplish anything in this 110th Congress unless the legislative body works together on a bipartisan basis and sends legislation to the President that he will sign. Senator MCCONNELL set the right tone in agreeing to cosponsor this most important legislation. Again, I