

which plainly states Congress does, in fact, support a new direction in Iraq. I commend the efforts of the bipartisan group of Senators who worked together to provide a positive framework for protecting our national security, supporting our troops, and defining our mission in Iraq. That compromise resolution reflects the will of the American people that we must, in fact, chart a new course of success in Iraq.

I especially commend the leadership and the great efforts of Senator WARNER, Senator NELSON, Senator COLLINS, Senator LEVIN, Senator BIDEN, Senator HAGEL, and others who have been involved in this effort over the last several days.

Until now, the debate over our mission in Iraq has been dominated by essentially what has been a false choice. On the one hand, we have had before Congress and before the American people plan A, which is the President's plan, which essentially has been to say, stay the course, plus, add another 21,500 troops into the fight in Baghdad. This would be a mistake. It would put more American troops into the middle of a civil war and places too much faith in what has been, to us, an incompetent Iraqi Government that has failed to do its work in securing the peace for its people and their country.

On the other hand, we have plan B, which is advocated by some Members of Congress, both in the House and this Senate, which calls for a more or less precipitous withdrawal from Iraq. From my point of view, this, too, is a bad choice. It could open the door to even more bloodshed and to a dangerous regionwide military escalation not only in Iraq but throughout the Middle East.

In my view, what we need is a plan C. That plan C should reflect the bipartisan opposition to the President's proposal to send an additional 21,500 troops to Iraq and also propose an alternative strategy for success in Iraq. That is exactly what we have accomplished with this compromise resolution which would make clear the following: First, that a bipartisan majority of Senators disagrees with the President's plan to increase the number of United States troops in Iraq as he has proposed; second, that the primary objective of a United States strategy in Iraq should be to encourage the Iraqi leaders to make the political compromises that are necessary to improve security, foster reconciliation, strengthen the Government, and end the violence; third, that the United States has an important role to play in helping to maintain the territorial integrity of Iraq, conducting counterterrorism activities, promoting regional stability and training and equipping the Iraqi troops; and, finally, that the United States should engage the nations in the Middle East to develop a regional, internationally sponsored peace and reconciliation diplomatic process and initiative within Iraq and throughout the region.

I will briefly elaborate on some of these points. The President's plan to simply surge or increase the number of troops in Iraq by 21,500 would be a mistake. First, the violence in Iraq is becoming increasingly sectarian, even intrasectarian. I worry that the American troops we are sending there are being placed in what is the midst of a civil war.

Second, I also worry that the larger American military presence will discourage the Iraqis from taking responsibility for their own security. As General John Abizaid said in this Capitol last November:

... it's easy for the Iraqis to rely upon us to do this work. I believe that more American forces prevent the Iraqis from taking more responsibility for their own future.

As we enter the debate over the next several days and weeks in this Senate, we should not forget those words:

I believe that more American forces prevent the Iraqis from taking more responsibility for their own future.

Furthermore, I am concerned that the plan places too much faith in the present Iraqi Government, which has so far shown little willingness to make the difficult decisions necessary to stop the bloodshed and the violence within their own country.

Finally, we have recent experience where the additional troops who have been sent into Iraq indicate that the results of those operations of the last 7 to 8 months have not been successful. Last year, we tried two separate surges—one was named Operation Together Forward I and the other was Operation Together Forward II—and neither stopped or slowed the violence in Iraq.

In fact, the bipartisan Iraq Study Group found that the violence had escalated during that same time period by 43 percent.

Adding to this is all the additional strain that a troop increase will place on our service men and women and their families.

For these reasons, I oppose the President's plan to increase our troop presence in Iraq. I am proud to be a cosponsor of the resolution that will be before this Senate. This resolution is more than about opposing the President's plan. It proposes a new strategy by calling for an enhanced diplomatic effort, a new focus on maintaining the territorial integrity of Iraq, maintaining the territorial integrity of Iraq, so that the weapons that are flowing from Iran and from Syria into that country can, in fact, be stopped. Stopping the flow of weapons and terrorists into that country will be part of bringing about the security that is needed in that country.

It also calls for a renewed focus on helping the Iraqis achieve a political settlement which is, at the end, a precondition to any successful outcome in Iraq.

We need a new direction in Iraq. We need to speak in a bipartisan voice. We, as an institution, need to fulfill our

constitutional duty as a coequal branch of Government as we move forward with what is one of the most important questions that today faces the American Nation.

The resolution I hope will be considered in the Senate this next week is a first step in that direction. I am proud to be a sponsor and a supporter of that resolution.

RECESS SUBJECT TO THE CALL OF THE CHAIR

Mr. SALAZAR. On behalf of the majority leader, I ask unanimous consent the Senate now stand in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 2:29 p.m., recessed until 3:26 p.m., and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Ms. KLOBUCHAR).

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

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

FAIR MINIMUM WAGE ACT OF 2007—Continued

Mr. HARKIN. Madam President, I rise to discuss an amendment I have filed to eliminate a provision that was added to the minimum wage bill regarding employee leasing firms, also known as professional employer organizations, or PEOs.

I have fought for a clean minimum wage bill, on the grounds that workers have been waiting 10 long years for this raise. During that time, businesses have seen record profits and productivity—and that has been equally the case in States and regions that have raised the minimum wage. Yet now we are being asked to include this aggressively anti-worker PEO provision in order to pass a minimum wage increase in the Senate.

For my colleagues and others who may not know what a PEO is, let me explain. It is an organization that handles administrative details for workers who actually do work for another company. For example, I might technically be employed by Tristate PEO, but I actually show up to work every day at Main Street Construction Company. Companies use PEOs so they don't have to handle the tax-and-benefits paperwork for many of their workers.

The language in the PEO provision, however, seeks to make these PEOs the "employer of record" for tax purposes. PEOs have sought to become the "employer of record" under various laws because they would like to be able to tell employers that the PEOs can independently take care of payroll taxes, workers' compensation, unemployment