men and women, with mothers and fathers and brothers and sisters and husbands and wives.

I think over the last few days, though, there has been a deafening silence, and people standing here and saying what the President is doing is the right thing to do, because it hasn't been the right thing to do, what the President has been doing, and he wants to continue more of the same.

I understand we are now at a point where we are going to talk about a couple of important nominations. We are going to try to get our fiscal house in order, which is not in order, because unless we do something by February 15, basically the Government closes. This is very unusual. I have spoken with the distinguished Republican leader, and one thing we are going to work on together this year, once we get out of this situation with the continuing resolution, is to work together to try to pass appropriations bills. That is good for the institution and good for the country. We are going to try to do that. It may require some late nights and long weeks, but we are going to do that. We have 13 appropriations bills, and we are going to work very hard to get them passed.

So I am terribly disappointed we haven't had the opportunity to vote on Senator WARNER's and Senator LEVIN's resolution, and on the McCain resolution, but we have heard enough about that. We are not going to be able to do that, and we will move on to other things.

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

Mr. MCCONNELL. Briefly, it is hard for me to remember how many times we were told by the other side last year that you come to the Senate to cast tough votes, but I don't think Senator GREGG's vote was a tough vote. Why would it be a tough vote to vote on supporting the troops? To me, that is an easy vote. We all will be forced, because of the process in the Senate, to cast votes we don't like. If you are in the majority, you get more of those than when you are in the minority. I can't imagine being, in effect, afraid of voting on the Gregg amendment to support the troops. That would be one of the easiest votes we ever cast around here.

Let me conclude by saying I am disappointed, as other members of my party in the Senate are disappointed, we are not having the Iraq debate this week. The distinguished minority whip, in his remarks, summed it up quite well. We will continue to talk about this important subject. There is no more important subject in the country right now. I know we will be debating other proposals in the coming months.

Mr. GREGG. Will the Senator yield?

Mr. MCCONNELL. I yield.

Mr. GREGG. I was just wondering if the Republican leader, and I ask this question through the Chair, believes that the Democratic leader is correct in his characterization that we have stopped this in a procedural manner. Is it not true that the Democratic leader controls the procedure as to whether there would be a vote? And is it not true, also, that we agreed to the Democratic leader's request that we offer only one amendment but that we just ask we be able to choose our amendment, and they be able to choose their amendment?

Mr. MCCONNELL. The Senator is entirely correct. We kept paring down the options that we wanted to offer in the course of this debate on the most important issue in the country. And at the end, as the Senator from New Hampshire just suggested, we were down to two: one that the majority leader and most of his party favor—and some of ours—and the amendment of the Senator from New Hampshire in support of the troops.

Apparently, the majority wanted to tell us which amendment we would offer.

Mr. GREGG. I thank the Republican leader.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I thank the Senator from New Hampshire.

I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will be a period for the transaction of morning business until 2 p.m. with the time equally divided between the two leaders or their designees, alternating sides when appropriate, with the first 30 minutes under the control of the minority, the second 30 minutes under the control of the majority, during which the Senator from New York, Mr. SCHUMER, and the Senator from Massachusetts, Mr. KENNEDY, be recognized for 15 minutes each.

The Senator from New Hampshire.

IRAQ

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I want to, once again, state the situation. It has been very well stated by the Republican leader. The simple fact is, we, as members of the minority, requested the right to offer an alternative to the proposal of the majority. That is not an unusual event in the Senate. In fact, it is the purpose of the Senate to debate different approaches.

What we asked as an alternative was very simple, straight forward language. Let me read it again. It simply stated:

> It is the sense of the Congress that Congress should not take any action that will endanger the United States military forces in the field, including the elimination or reduction of funds for troops in the field, as such action with respect to funding would undermine the safety or harm their effectiveness in pursuing their assigned missions.

All this language says is that whether you agree with the President or whether you disagree with the President, whether you support a commitment of more troops or you don't support a commitment of more troops, once the troops are on the ground in the fight, we are going to give them the financial support, the logistical support, the equipment that they need in order to protect themselves and pursue their mission effectively.

Members do not have to support the President to support this language. It is not designed to state the President is right or the President is wrong. It is simply language designed to say that an American soldier deserves the support of the Congress of the United States. That is an elementary responsibility of this Senate.

The fact that the Democratic leadership will not allow Members to vote on this simple statement of support for American troops is a transgression on the purposes of the Senate, which is to express itself relative to the actions of our soldiers in the field and how we will support them.

It is literally impossible to address the debate on Iraq without addressing the most fundamental issue, which is whether our troops are going to be supported when they are asked to defend us in the field. The idea that we can decouple the support for the troops from the issue of policy is absurd on its face, and the position of the Democratic leadership that we should not address the issue of supporting the troops when we address the issue of whether the tactics being pursued by the military commanders in the field are correct—which doesn't happen to be the responsibility of Congress; that is the responsibility of the commanders—is by nature inconceivable, inconsistent, and simply not defensive.

In fact, it is so absurd on its face that I would simply quote the national commander of the American Legion, Mr. Paul Morin, who says:

> We will not separate the war from the warrior.

That is what this is about: whether the Democratic leadership takes the truly indefensible position that in a debate on the issue of Iraq, we do not discuss the support for the person we are asking to go out and defend this Nation.

What this really comes down to is very simple. This resolution would have received broad bipartisan support in this Senate. That is because there are very few Members in this Senate—I would guess virtually none—who don't believe that our obligation as a Senate, as a legislative body which funds the military, that our obligation is to give the soldiers in the field what they need in order to defend themselves and carry out their mission.

So rather than have a vote on our amendment which would have received a large majority in this Senate—much