

wounded. One hospital in Texas has handled 250 amputations. There are 2,000 double amputees as a result of this war.

The war continues to move in the wrong direction and yet—instead of digging us out of the hole it created in Iraq—instead of stopping this downward spiral of destruction—instead of taking the fight to the terrorists who attacked us on September 11—this White House wants us to keep doing more of the same in Iraq.

In January, President Bush said he would escalate the conflict and send 21,500 new troops for a few months. Of course, we were misled on that. We now know the number is around 30,000, and they will be there indefinitely, and the President has said he might ask for more troops. There is no short-term surge, as the President has described. It is more of the same. The President is placing troops in the middle of an Iraqi sectarian civil war. More military solutions to a problem that General Petraeus, our top commander in Iraq, has said can only be solved politically. Our commander on the ground in Iraq has said that only 20 percent of it can be won militarily. That is not good enough for me. We need to find a new way forward.

If the President will not listen to the generals, if he will not listen to the American people, who have spoken for a new direction, then perhaps he will listen to us, Congress, when we send him a supplemental bill that acknowledges reality in Iraq. We must find a new way forward. The President can swagger all he wants, but we have 3,241 dead Americans.

The Iraq measure in this bill changes the mission of U.S. troops from policing a civil war to counterterrorism, training, and force protection. It rejects the notion that this war can be won militarily, and it sets a goal of redeploying our troops by March 2008. It includes a requirement for a political, diplomatic, and economic strategy to be implemented in conjunction with the redeployment.

The Iraq language is based on a simple premise: Iraq can be won only politically. In short, it offers a responsible strategy in Iraq that the American people asked for last November 7—a strategy that will enhance our country's ability to wage war on terror.

Contrary to what President Bush believes, the key to success in Iraq is not escalating the conflict by adding tens of thousands of additional troops to trod down the same dangerous road. It is to find a new way forward.

I urge my colleagues to support this supplemental. After 4 years of war, our troops deserve a strategy to help them complete the mission so they can come home.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Massachusetts.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I wish to thank our leader for his comments about the progress that has been made in the Senate on issues that affect the

working middle-class families of this country and also for his responses on the issue of the war in Iraq, where there should be an opportunity, as we focus on the particular amendment, to get into that in greater detail. But I thank him for his very worthwhile comments this afternoon.

NORTHERN IRELAND PEACE PROCESS

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, the leaders of Northern Ireland took another giant step toward lasting peace earlier today when Sinn Fein and the Democratic Unionist Party reached a landmark agreement to share power in a joint administration to be established on May 8. The agreement gives hope to all who have worked so long and so hard to bring unionists and nationalists together in government on a permanent basis.

Prime Minister Ahern of Ireland and Prime Minister Blair of Britain have been strong allies for peace. John Hume and many others have been heroes along the way. But the indispensable persons in this historic agreement today are Gerry Adams, the leader of Sinn Fein, and Ian Paisley, the leader of the Democratic Unionist Party. In reaching this agreement, they have acted to strengthen democracy and create a future of peace and stability for the future of that troubled land.

Today, the people of Northern Ireland salute them both for reaching this new day, and the world congratulates them as well. We know it was not an easy step to take. Their past disagreements have been intense and deep. The challenges they have faced often seemed irreconcilable, and the scars of the past have often seemed impossible to heal. Compromises have been difficult and painful to achieve. But with this agreement, Sinn Fein and the DUP have finally taken the essential step of looking forward together—not backward—and have agreed at long last to work with one another for the future of Northern Ireland.

The eyes of the world will be on them on May 8. All who care about lasting peace and stability look forward to the permanent restoration of the Northern Ireland Government at that time. In a world where political resolution often is elusive, these leaders deserve enormous credit for giving us hope.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, I listened with interest to the remarks of the distinguished Senator from Massachusetts. I do, myself, feel a great sense of

pleasure and comfort in what has transpired today with regard to Ireland, and I wanted to say so.

THE EMPLOYEE FREE CHOICE ACT

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, on March 1, the other body passed the horribly misnamed "Employee Free Choice Act," H.R. 800, and we may soon be called upon to consider that bill or a similar Senate counterpart. The bill was steamrolled through the House of Representatives in less than a month from its introduction, with only a single day of subcommittee hearings, at which only one expert witness critical of the bill was permitted to testify. It was considered in the House with only limited amendments allowed to be offered. Obviously, it is incumbent on us to make certain the Senate takes the opportunity for fuller debate on a measure of such wide impact.

The chairman of the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee has scheduled a hearing tomorrow, where we will undoubtedly hear how "unfair" the current unionization system is and how it must be amended to allow for greater unionization. I am sure we will have a full and robust debate in this body. But as we kick off this debate over whether to deny private ballots to workers who wish to unionize, it is my hope we will be able to at least hold fast and true to the facts. There should be a full debate on these facts.

There is ample evidence to indicate that we should be wary of amending the National Labor Relations Act, the NLRA, in a way that would upset the balance in national labor policy between labor and management and employer and employee. We must not rely on slogans, anecdotal stories, and questionable secretly commissioned and selective statistics about alleged unfair labor practices.

The NLRA and its attendant volumes of reported decisions and case precedent by the National Labor Relations Board is an extremely complicated, interwoven area of law. Amending it in the way the sponsors of H.R. 800 envision could rip a gaping hole in the precise weave of this complex fabric and have a dramatic impact with many unintended consequences.

It must also be considered that amending the NLRA will not only affect the welfare of unions, but it will also have a negative overall impact on workers, employers—especially small employers—and on the economy and America's ability to be competitive in a global economy.

So let us begin the discussion of the bill. The Employee Free Choice Act is designed to increase union membership, which currently stands at 7.4 percent of the private sector workforce. The bill would accomplish that through an artificial, union-controlled "card check" certification procedure in place of the traditional NLRB-supervised private ballot election or, as