

bill. So the sooner we can get through this process, the better.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff sent a letter to me, week before last, indicating that if we push this into late April, it creates a lot of problems for the troops. So we hope we can get through this process, resolve our differences, and get the money for the troops at the earliest possible time.

As the majority leader has indicated, we will be going forward with the stem cell issue. There is an alternative proposal by Senator COLEMAN and Senator ISAKSON that we think solves some of the ethical concerns and which will be considered by the Senate. Both will be subjected to the 60-vote threshold, and it is my hope the Coleman-Isakson bill, which could be signed by the President and will actually make a difference, will make it through the legislative process and down to the President for his signature.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

Mr. REID. Madam President, before I go to my formal remarks I have prepared, as I indicated, I have had extensive conversations during the past week with Chairman OBEY, chairman of the Appropriations Committee, and I think we have made progress as to where we need to go in order to do this as soon as possible. There is some controversy over the time limit. We know the President has indicated he needs the money right away, but even last year, when the Republicans were in charge, we finished the supplemental bill in June and there were no complaints at that time.

We have had a statement from the Congressional Research Service that the money will last until sometime in July. Even the Pentagon itself has indicated the money will last until around the first part of June. So we are going to do the very best we can to complete this as quickly as possible. We know it is important, and we will move forward as expeditiously as possible.

During this week, since the House is not here, I intend to continue my dialog with Chairman OBEY. I have not spoken to the Speaker today, but I have a meeting with her later, at 5 o'clock, and so we will move forward, and I appreciate the remarks of the Republican leader.

OPENING OF THE THIRD WORK PERIOD

Mr. REID. Madam President, throughout the world, Easter has been celebrated. This was done on Sunday. On that joyous day, Pope Benedict spoke of the human condition with a very heavy heart, and I quote:

How many wounds—how much suffering there is in the world. Nothing positive comes from Iraq, torn apart by continual slaughter as the civilian population flees.

As we open the third work period this year, Pope Benedict's words weigh on my mind. I hope we will honor them as we continue to work in a bipartisan

manner to address that suffering by moving America in a new direction at home and abroad.

That was the promise we made to the American people when the 110th Congress opened 3 months ago; not a promise made only by Democrats but by Democrats and Republicans. Although we have only completed the first two work periods of the session, we have made considerable progress.

When we began in January, we knew all our goals depended on changing the way Washington works. So our first order of business was passing the toughest lobbying ethics reform legislation in our Nation's history. We were guided through that by the chairman of our Rules Committee, Senator FEINSTEIN.

Next, with the skill of Senators KENNEDY and BAUCUS, we voted to give working Americans a much deserved and long overdue raise by finally increasing the minimum wage.

After the minimum wage, we addressed the fiscal mess left by the last Congress and passed a continuing resolution on a bipartisan basis, then enacted tough spending limits and limited earmarks for this fiscal year.

We then set our sights on keeping our country safe by finally passing the recommendations set forth by the 9/11 Commission, recommendations that came many years ago. This legislation was led by Senator LIEBERMAN, as he skillfully led us on this long overdue legislation.

Next, we passed, under the guidance of our brilliant chairman, KENT CONRAD, a balanced budget that put American families first by cutting taxes for working people, increasing investment for education, veterans, health care, and implementing the same pay-as-you-go rules that every American family must follow.

While addressing these crucial priorities here at home—ethics reform, minimum wage, homeland security, a return to fiscal responsibility, and a balanced budget for working families—we have also continued to seek a new direction for the war in Iraq at every opportunity, as the American people called for us to do last November. That is why we passed—with Senator BYRD and Senator MURRAY—last week an emergency supplemental appropriations bill that fully funded our troops while also setting forth a new course in Iraq.

The President has put our troops in the middle of a civil war. That was never supposed to be their mission. Every day the price we pay grows worse—soon to be 3,300 American lives lost, tens of thousands more wounded, and according to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 600,000 Iraqis have been killed. Our American Treasury has been depleted by about a \$½ trillion because of this war. Yet there is still no end in sight for our troops or our taxpayers.

Let me be clear. Democrats are committed to giving our troops the funds

they need. The supplemental appropriations bill that we are trying to send to President Bush will provide every dollar the commander has requested and it will go further by providing funding to address the unconscionable conditions at Walter Reed and the other military health care facilities the President's budget left out.

Democrats are united in our commitment to fully funding our troops on the ground in Iraq and here at home, but we are also committed to providing our troops a strategy for success in Iraq, which President Bush has failed to do from the very start of this war more than 4 years ago.

Virtually all experts, military and civilian, agree the war cannot be won militarily. Success can only come when all the political leaders in Iraq reach a settlement. Even General Petraeus, who is our commander on the ground there, said that only 20 percent of the war can be won militarily. It can only be won politically, diplomatically, and economically. Eighty percent of the war must be conducted through economics, through politics, and through diplomacy.

Pope Benedict, the spiritual leader of more than a billion people, said on Easter Sunday, and again I quote:

Nothing positive comes from Iraq, torn apart by continual slaughter as the civilian population flees.

That is why we are telling the President he needs to make good on his promise to get the Iraqi people to meet the benchmarks they set for themselves but have never followed through on. After 4 years, it is long past time for Iraq to take responsibility for its own failures and its own future.

American troops are putting their lives at risk every single day, but Iraqi leaders are not willing to take the political risk of governing their own country. That must change. That is what Congress is demanding, that is what the American people, by a large majority, demand. The President should be leading us in that direction, not threatening to veto funding for our troops unless we rubberstamp his flawed plan.

Over the next 2 weeks, the President has an opportunity to work with Congress to let his views be heard on how to improve this bill. Speaker PELOSI and I invited him last month to sit down and work with us to develop a strategy together. We remain ready to do that. But this will require a commitment by the President to move beyond the political theater and take a seat at the table of negotiation, of compromise, of direction change.

Recall the Pope's Easter message: "Nothing positive comes from Iraq."

While we continue to press the President and his supporters in Congress to chart a new course in Iraq, we will move to the next set of issues crucial to the American people: expanding Federal funding for stem cell research, lowering Medicare prescription drug costs, delivering a new national energy

policy, and implementing tough, fair immigration reform.

This week, we will focus the Senate's attention on S. 5, the Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act. We will be led by Senators HARKIN, KENNEDY, and FEINSTEIN. Democrats and Republicans joined together last year to pass legislation that would have made stem cell lines more available to scientists, while at the same time strictly regulating how they could be used. This legislation gives hope to millions of Americans.

The actions of the Senate and House gave hope to as many as 100 million Americans and tens of thousands of Nevadans who suffer from cancer, diabetes, Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, spinal cord injuries, heart disease, and Lou Gehrig's disease. Sadly, President Bush vetoed that bipartisan bill, and as a result we must take on this urgent cause again. This week, we will debate the Stem Cell Research Enhance Act and will fight to see that it becomes law.

Following debate on the stem cell bill, we will turn our attention to reducing drug costs for senior citizens. The flaws in the Medicare drug program are well documented, but many of them can be traced back to one simple fact: The current law puts drug companies and insurance companies ahead of seniors. Regardless of whether we supported or opposed the law that created the Medicare drug benefit, all of us want to make the program work better for seniors and people with disabilities, and right now they are paying too much because the Federal Government is unable to negotiate lower priced drugs. S. 3, the Medicare Prescription Drug Price Negotiation Act of 1967, will fix that injustice by making it easier for the most vulnerable in our society to afford the medicine they need.

We are being told by the minority that they are not going to allow a provision to be changed in the law which says Medicare can negotiate for lower price drugs. Why? I guess they and the President believe that HMOs and insurance companies and all these managed care entities deserve to have an advantage over Medicare. It is unfair. Medicare should be able to negotiate for lower prices and, in effect, compete with these money-hungry HMOs and insurance companies.

Next, we will move to energy legislation that will improve our national security and protect our environment. For the past several weeks, gas prices have risen dramatically. Last week, they rose 11 cents—in 1 week. The average price I heard in this morning's news is about \$2.90 a gallon. In places in California, it is approaching \$4 a gallon for gasoline. One reason for this spike is the fear premium caused partially by the administration's inept foreign policy. Another reason is the empty words and unfunded promises of the administration's shortsighted energy policy. President Bush's budget choices have robbed the Treasury of

the funds we need to invest in a better, more sustainable energy policy, and his friends in the oil and energy industry have failed to fill the void by investing in alternatives to oil.

I am hopeful in the coming weeks the Senate will consider legislation that will put us on the right track toward increased production and use of renewable fuels, renewable electricity, and energy-efficient products, buildings, and vehicles. This will improve our energy security and reduce the risk of global warming.

After energy policy, we will focus on the challenge of comprehensive immigration reform. We all agree America's immigration system is broken; our borders remain unsecured. Our laws remain underenforced. Eleven or twelve million undocumented immigrants continue to live in the shadows. Last year, the Senate passed bipartisan immigration reform that would have fixed our broken borders. Unfortunately, the legislation fell victim to partisan politics in the House and to inaction by the President, so we must readdress the issue—again. We will start with a bill that takes a tough and smart approach to fixing the borders, cracking down on enforcement, and laying out a path to earned legal status for undocumented immigrants already here and contributing to our society.

In January, we promised the American people a new era of open, honest Government. We promised a new direction that will put families and working people, college students and senior citizens first. We also promised a new course in Iraq that honors the service of our men and women in uniform. Heaven knows we have tried, but the President is charging forward with the same mindless strategy in Iraq that the Pope calls a continual slaughter. Defined in the dictionary, slaughter is to kill in a bloody and violent manner and in large numbers. This slaughter must end. For the sake of humanity and our country, it should be no more.

In these first few months, we have made progress. As we begin our third work period, there is much left to be done, but I am confident that with a continued commitment to bipartisanship, we will rise to the challenges ahead and answer the call for renewal of the American dream.

It would be wrong for me not to end by saying we have had the cooperation, most of the time, from the minority. It has been most helpful. We could not have passed these bills without the help of the Republicans. I have a warm, cordial relationship with my counterpart, Senator MCCONNELL. He is easy to work with. We have had some procedural bumps in the road, but we have worked through those, and as a result of this we have been able to accomplish some good things for our country.

I apologize to my colleagues for taking the time I did, but I ask that there will be a full hour for morning business—is that true?

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

Mr. REID. I thank the Chair.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will now be a period for the transaction of morning business, not to exceed 60 minutes, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each, the first 30 minutes under the control of the Republicans and the second 30 minutes under the control of the majority.

The Senator from Wyoming.

IRAQ

Mr. THOMAS. Madam President, I will take my 10 minutes this morning. I wanted to speak a little bit about the Iraq supplemental bill which is really the issue that is pending. We are not going to be able to get to it today, but nevertheless it is the pending unfinished business.

Despite what the majority leader has indicated, it is too bad we have not been able to move this forward. The Senate went on Easter recess, of course. The majority stressed the importance of completing the bill before the end of March and getting it to the President without delay. Democrats in the Senate, of course, have blocked votes on the amendment to supplement the part that we could have—where they indicated they wanted to speed up the process. Regrettably, we are now on the 64th day since the President submitted his request to Congress, and we have still not sent up a bill.

To make matters worse, we don't even have a conference committee in place to work out the differences between the bill that has been passed in the Senate and the bill that has been passed in the House. The Senate is ready for a conference for this bill. The committee of the conferees has been announced, and they are prepared to get this work done. On the other hand, the House of Representatives is on recess and no House conferees. So we are still held up, and will be, on the bill that is really important and needs to be moved. While our troops at home and overseas are facing funding uncertainties, the Democratic House leadership is taking a couple of weeks off. This makes it very difficult.

We talked about what we are going to accomplish. It is interesting to accomplish it in the Senate, but it has to go through the House and the Senate and then to the President to have the impact the bill is supposed to have. The Speaker of the House should call the Members back to Washington to complete the supplemental bill and get it to the President by the end of the week. I would like to associate myself with the letter that was sent to the Speaker of the House asking her to call the body back to Washington.

It is important to remind people that our troops did not take the week off.