

the Governor of Virginia, a wonderful man. He is a public servant for all of the right reasons. He has been burdened as Governor of the State with this terrible tragedy at Virginia Tech.

He called me and made sure that we were involved in the decisionmaking he has. He has appointed a blue ribbon panel that is going to look into this situation. It is the right thing to do. He has also asked that the people around the country, at 12 o'clock noon, stand in a moment of silence in memory of the loved and lost in that terrible tragedy in Blacksburg, VA, at Virginia Tech University.

As a memento of that, many people around the country are wearing the colors of the Virginia Tech Hokies. I am proud to do that. In just a minute, Mr. President, we will stand in silence with the rest of the country in recognition of the tragedy in Virginia.

Will the Chair advise me when the hour of 12 noon arrives?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Chair will.

The noon hour has arrived.

Mr. REID. The Senate will stand in silence for 1 minute.

(Moment of silence)

Mr. President, thank you very much.

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 I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

RECESS SUBJECT TO THE CALL OF THE CHAIR

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I now ask unanimous consent that the Senate stand in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 12:01 p.m., recessed subject to the call of the Chair and reassembled at 2:13 p.m., when called to order by the Acting President pro tempore (Mr. WHITEHOUSE).

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

IRAQ

Mr. REID. Mr. President, we heard again this afternoon the same old story from President Bush about the war in Iraq. He claimed again that his new escalation strategy is working, that the signs of success are everywhere, and that victory is imminent. He also, once again, attacked those of us with the courage to ask the tough questions and tell the truth about Iraq.

In an effort to shift attention from this administration's failed policies—and I say that in the plural—the President and his allies have repeatedly questioned whether I and my fellow

Democrats support our troops. No one wants us to succeed in Iraq more than Democrats. We have proven that time and time again since this war started more than 4 years ago. We take a backseat to no one in supporting our troops, and we will never abandon our troops in a time of war.

Given the White House spin machine that has been working overtime in an effort to defend its failed policies, it is important for me to repeat what I said yesterday afternoon in this Chamber: The longer we continue down the President's path, the further we will be from responsibly ending this war. I said it yesterday, I say it again: The longer we continue down the President's path, the further we will be from responsibly ending this war. But there is still a chance to change course, and we must change course.

Partisans who launched attacks on my comments are the same ones who continue to support the failed strategy that hurts our troops. Is this administration supporting the troops when it sends our brave men and women into battle without the necessary body armor; with vehicles that are not properly armored? I ask, is the administration supporting the troops when it fails to provide them the health care they have earned when they come home?

Our responsibilities end with these troops—never. They don't end when they leave Iraq. They don't end when they get back home. We have to continue to help them. That is what we have done.

Is the administration supporting the troops by threatening to delay their funding unless Congress continues to rubberstamp its failed policy?

I believe supporting our troops means giving them the funding they need and a strategy they deserve. It means stopping the partisan attacks. And it means spending time working together on a bipartisan basis to develop an effective strategy to successfully end this war.

I wish some of my detractors felt the same. An effective strategy is exactly what we are offering the President and our troops—no more, no less. Let's all understand, changing course in Iraq will increase America's security by bringing this war to a responsible end and permitting our troops to more effectively fight terror all over the world. This is precisely the strategy President Bush is vowing to veto.

We heard the same old story from the President today because his strategy calls for more of the same. It is a failed strategy for our troops in Iraq. It is a failed strategy for our security at home. It is dangerous that the President refuses to recognize the reality on the ground in Iraq.

For those who claim we are on the right path in Iraq, I ask them to look at this week's newspapers. I am only going to mention now a few things we find in this week's news.

The White House announced additional National Guard troops would be

sent to Iraq; many, if not most, without the necessary training and equipment. The White House extended tours in Iraq for all active Army troops from 12 to 15 months. A week after the Iraqi Parliament was bombed in the Green Zone, which is the most secure part of Baghdad, almost 200 Iraqis lost their lives in that city on Wednesday. The bombings continue today. They will continue tomorrow. We are losing about four American troops every day this month.

I went to the White House this Wednesday with Speaker PELOSI to meet with the President and talk about a bipartisan way to craft an effective strategy in Iraq. We did so because we believe, as do the American people, that the lives of too many of our soldiers and too many Iraqis are on the line. The President refused to work with us.

How has the President responded? He has chosen to repeat his inflexible veto threats and continued to attack those who questioned his failed policies. Meanwhile, our troops and our national security are suffering.

It is painfully clear to me, the American people, bipartisan majorities in both the House and the Senate, military experts all over this country, and the Iraq Study Group, that the only way to succeed is to give our troops the strategy their sacrifices deserve. These groups all know there is no military solution in Iraq.

General Petraeus, the commander on the ground, has said so himself: 20 percent can be won militarily; 80 percent has to be won through our diplomatic efforts, politics, and economics.

I repeat, the only way to succeed lies through a comprehensive political, diplomatic, and economic strategy—so says the commander on the ground there, General Petraeus. Unfortunately, the only one to whom this is not obvious is our President.

The longer we continue down the President's path, the further we will be from success. But there is still a chance to change course, and we must change course. That is what we are offering the President in the supplemental we passed in both bodies with bipartisan support. We are offering a reasonable and attainable timeline to reduce combat missions and refocus our efforts on the real threats to our security. We are offering action, not just words.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, I wanted to say to my friend and