

when we were in the majority, said they wanted to know what the Republican plan was to relieve the pain at the pump. Well, the Democrats are in charge now, and we would like to know what their plan is. We believe this is something we ought to work on together, on a bipartisan basis, to try to relieve the pain at the pump being experienced by working men and women and families all across this country. The only way we are going to be able to do this is on a bipartisan basis, but the Democrats control the agenda. The majority leader basically controls the time on the Senate floor. We need to know when he plans to bring up some meaningful relief for the American consumers to try to bring that price down.

We need to do this in the short term, the near term, not the long term only. We do need nuclear power. We need to do research in the biofuels and other alternatives. We need to employ wind energy and other clean technologies that will provide for part of our energy needs. We haven't discovered a way to make any of those useful to operate our vehicles. It is oil, and it is gasoline.

The only way we are going to be able to provide relief in the near term is to increase supply by reducing our dependency on imported energy, producing more of it domestically, and relieving some of the regulatory impediments which have made it impossible to create a new refinery in this country in the last 30 years. Only by increasing the supply in the near term are we going to be able to see prices come down at the pump as we continue to explore alternative forms of energy and other ways to meet our energy needs, while continuing to see our economy grow and continue to create jobs.

I hope the majority will take this request seriously and will come back and tell us what their plan is to relieve the pain at the pump American consumers are experiencing today.

Mr. President, I yield the floor, and 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. SPECTER. 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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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.

VISITING STUDENTS SEE GOVERNMENT IN OPERATION

Mr. SPECTER. Mr. President, we have in the galleries today students from the seventh grade of the Saligman Middle School in the Philadelphia suburbs. I am not permitted under Senate rules to acknowledge their presence, except verbally, but my granddaughter, Silvi Specter, is among a very impressive group of 59 students who left Philadelphia before dawn today to come to the Nation's Capital to see government in operation.

I wish I had the opportunity to visit the Senate when I was in the seventh grade. It took me a little longer to get here. I have sensed from this very bright, intelligent group of students that we may produce a Senator or we may produce a President because the sky is the limit if the students apply themselves and work hard.

I was explaining, when we took a picture on the steps today, that the Congress of the United States makes the laws for the country. This is basic civics, but it is good to repeat it. The House of Representatives, consisting of 435 Members, is a representative body, one for every approximately 700,000 people in the United States. Each of our 50 States has 2 Senators. We consider legislation, we vote—pass bills by both the House and Senate—and then we get together on a conference. We have an agreement and a conference report is then voted on separately. The measures then go to the President of the United States.

We have a fascinating part of the legislative process right now with the issue of the funding of the Iraq war. The Constitution creates the Congress under article I and creates the office of the executive branch, the Presidency, under article II. We have a unique constitutional confrontation. I think it is not an overstatement to say it is of historic proportion—perhaps the most dramatic constitutional confrontation between the article I power of the Congress to appropriate, commonly known as the power of the purse, and the authority of the President under his power as Commander in Chief.

The President is insisting on carrying out the program he has in mind with the addition of troops, a surge in Iraq, to try to restore order to that country. I believe had we known Saddam Hussein did not have weapons of mass destruction, we would not have gone into Iraq to start with, but once there, we do not want to leave it in a state of turmoil. So we are trying to work our way through the problems as best we can.

The President laid down two markers for the Iraqis in his State of the Union speech: first, that they should secure Baghdad; and second, that they should end sectarian violence. Regrettably, they have done neither.

Congress legislated, providing the funding the President asked for but setting dates for withdrawal. The President vetoed that, saying identifying a withdrawal date would be to tell the enemy how long they would have to stay there to outlast us. Now we are looking for some resolution. It is complicated. The House is talking about appropriating half of the \$100 billion and having another vote in July. The Senate has yet to formulate a proposal.

For certain, by September, when we face the full \$500 billion appropriation bill, there is a very difficult time ahead unless we can see light at the end of the tunnel.

On the front page of the New York Times today, one of our Members said that in September there will not be support unless we see some significant progress. The metaphor "light at the end of the tunnel" perhaps is accurate or perhaps we will not be at that place. Because there is grave concern about radical Islamic fundamentalists with the determination by radical Islamic fundamentalists to destroy our society and to kill us—as they did with the striking events of 9/11—there is a concern if we do not fight the insurgents in Iraq, we will be fighting them in the United States.

These are weighty issues and there is a lot of controversy. Speaking for myself, I am still considering what the right course is. I voted against a withdrawal date at this time because there has been a commitment to a surge, 30,000 additional troops. They are not all there yet. Perhaps we will have better results by September. But those are the issues which await a determination.

I reference this in terms of the big issue of the day and how it illustrates the functioning of American Government, Congress and the Presidency, and what we have as a constitutional confrontation.

I know the time has come to move on to other business. I thank my colleagues and the Chair for permitting me to go beyond the 11 o'clock hour.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I gather morning business has expired?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator is correct.

Mr. McCONNELL. I yield myself 5 minutes of my leader time.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The leader is recognized.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

SERGEANT FIRST CLASS ROBERT V. DERENDA

Mr. President, a bronze plaque hangs at the Joint Readiness Center at Fort Dix, NJ. All the new Army recruits there pass by it, and all the regulars know the story it tells by heart.

This plaque declares the Joint Readiness Center to be named after a Kentucky soldier who volunteered for his country, served a cause he believed to be just and right, and made the ultimate sacrifice.

So I ask the Senate to pause today in grateful memory of SFC Robert V. Derenda, a Ledbetter, KY, resident assigned to the First Brigade, 98th Division of the U.S. Army Reserve.

Sergeant Derenda was killed on August 5, 2005, when a civilian fuel truck collided with the humvee he was driving as the lead vehicle for a convoy mission in Rubiah, Iraq. He was 42 years old.

It could have been far worse if not for Robert's astute driving skills and rapid reaction. His quick maneuvering of the humvee just prior to impact saved his men in the back seat.