

it and try to decide how you should handle this very important piece of legislation. We need to do something. We need to do something that is good. We need to pass a bill. I guess no bill will be perfect, but we do not need to pass bills with serious flaws in them, those that undermine the principles that any effective immigration system should be founded on.

I will have extra time. We will talk about that later and talk about some other things I have.

I yield the floor.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the hour of 12:40 p.m. having arrived, the Senate will stand in recess until the hour of 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:40 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. CARPER).

COMPREHENSIVE IMMIGRATION REFORM ACT OF 2007—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, I understand under the order, Senator SESSIONS is to be recognized to speak for a period of time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is correct.

Mr. BAUCUS. I have consulted with Senator SESSIONS. I asked if it was OK if I proceeded for 5 minutes preceding his remarks. Accordingly, I ask unanimous consent to proceed for 5 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

PAY RAISE FOR SOLDIERS

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, I rise in support of our troops. There are few things as important as the gift of one's labor, one's love, one's life. Our soldiers are asked to make generous sacrifices of these precious commodities every day. Our finest young soldiers work 19 hours a day in hot, dry, dangerous places such as Fallujah and Kabul. They do so because they have a deep love of country. Many of our soldiers make the ultimate sacrifice with their lives. Increasingly, we are asking more and more of our soldiers. In April, Secretary Gates announced he is extending the tours of duty for active-duty soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan from 12 to 15 months. Our troops have already accomplished so much: deposed Saddam Hussein, toppled the Taliban, responded to the threats posed by vicious terrorists around the world. They have done everything we have asked of them. I was, therefore, disappointed when I came across a newspaper article this weekend noting that the administration opposes a modest pay raise for American soldiers.

The House Defense authorization bill includes a one-half of 1 percent increase in military pay above the Presi-

dent's request. For the average new enlistee, this will amount to roughly \$75 per year in extra pay—clearly, not enough to cover additional costs: school clothes for kids, a family trip to the ballpark, a few tanks of gas at the prices we are stuck paying.

The increase is aimed at reducing the gap in pay between comparable military and civilian jobs that stands at about 4 percent today. Even after the proposed increase, that gap will remain at least 1.4 percent, clearly not keeping up with civilian pay increases.

Of the billions of dollars we spend on the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, it would seem absurd to oppose this small pay bump, but that is exactly what the administration is doing. In a May 17, 2007, letter to the House Armed Services Committee, the President's budget director announced the pay increase included in the House bill is "unnecessary." I believe it is necessary. I believe it is necessary to do anything we can to provide for the welfare of our fighting men and women. Salaries for newly minted enlistees start at about \$15,600 per year. To put this in perspective, new enlistees with three or more dependents are eligible for food stamps.

Among the sacrifices we ask of our men and women in harm's way, going hungry should not be one of them. In addition, the administration opposes a \$40 per month increase in allowances for the widows of slain soldiers. Again, this is a modest bump in benefits and pales in comparison to the sacrifice these families have made. Forty dollars a month extra won't make it any easier to face another day without a loved one who is lost, but it could help pay the rent, keep the heat on, and relieve a bit of stress for families facing a new world without their spouse. That is why I am urging the administration to reconsider their opposition to a pay increase and additional survivor benefit. Supporting our troops is something we all agree on, Republicans and Democrats alike.

I ask the President to reconsider his opposition to increased pay for our soldiers and aid for this war's widows. We may not all agree on what we should do in Iraq going forward, but I believe we can and should reach a simple accommodation on troop pay.

Mr. President, I see my friend getting prepared. I ask for 1 or 2 minutes' indulgence.

CHILDREN'S HEALTH

Mr. President, in the Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Bibles, the book of Ben Sirah counsels: "Observe the opportunity."

This year, the Senate has the opportunity to improve the health of millions of American children, for the next decade.

The Senate has the opportunity to renew and improve the State Children's Health Insurance Program, or CHIP.

Let us seize the opportunity.

There is no greater health care priority for me this year.

In a few short weeks, the Finance Committee will consider legislation to

reauthorize and strengthen this successful 10-year-old program.

Many of us were present in this Chamber when we created CHIP in 1997. Since then, this program has proven to be a true success.

Since its inception, CHIP has brought health insurance to more than 40 million low-income children.

It has saved the lives of many children, and it has improved the availability and quality of care for many more.

In my home State of Montana, Fawn Tuhy has some pretty active kids. Montana is a State full of active kids, and active kids get hurt.

Fawn's 2-year-old needed stitches after hitting her head. Fawn's 6-year-old broke his arm twice.

Fawn's medical bills could have sunk their family of six. But she credits CHIP with keeping her kids healthy, and her family afloat.

CHIP has made that kind of difference for millions of Americans, in the last 10 years.

Among families with incomes less than about \$34,000 a year—that is twice the poverty level—the share of uninsured children has dropped by a quarter.

CHIP has held the number of uninsured children down, even as the number of uninsured adult Americans has increased.

But Congress cannot rest on its laurels. We have to continue CHIP. We have to build on its success, and we have to do it before CHIP's funding expires, on September 30.

The Finance Committee is poised to act, with a markup early next month.

In this reauthorization, we will pursue five principles:

First, we must provide adequate funds to keep coverage for those who have it now.

Last week, the Congressional Budget Office reported that CHIP needs an additional \$13.4 billion, just to maintain current coverage.

Maintaining level funding is just not good enough. If funding stays flat, then 4 million American children could lose health coverage, over the next 10 years.

Second, we must also reach the 6 million uninsured children who are eligible for either CHIP or Medicaid coverage but not enrolled.

CBO says that the best opportunity to further reduce the number of uninsured children is to target CHIP enrollment toward more families whose incomes are below twice the poverty level.

Third, we must support State efforts to expand CHIP coverage to more kids. States have found innovative ways to reach as many uninsured kids as possible. States have acted according to their unique abilities and needs.

Fourth, we must improve the quality of health care that children receive.

We are making great strides to improve the quality of health care for adults through Medicare. Yet there is no comparable investment in quality