

binding language on redeployment. While our brave troops are stuck in the middle of a civil war in Iraq, we have a bill with political benchmarks that lack meaningful consequences if they are not reached.

Legislation as important as this funding bill should have been openly considered in this body. I am talking about an open and on-the-record debate with amendments offered and voted upon. That is the way the Senate is supposed to operate. I shared the desire of my colleagues to pass this important bill as quickly as possible, but that was no excuse for us avoiding our responsibilities as legislators. Unquestionably, it was easier and faster for us to send a place holder bill back to the House. By doing that, the real work could be done behind closed doors where all kinds of horse trading can occur and decisions are unknown until the final deal is sealed. That process makes it a lot easier for most Members of Congress to avoid responsibility for the final outcome—we didn't have to cast any votes or make any difficult decisions. In short, we didn't have to do any legislating.

Now that we face a badly flawed, take-it-or-leave-it bill, we can simply shrug, apparently, and tell our constituents we did the best we could. That is not good enough, not when we are talking about the most pressing issue facing this country.

In the 5 months we have been in control of Congress, a unified Democratic caucus, with the help of some Republicans, has made great strides toward changing the course in Iraq. We were able to pass the first supplemental bill, supported by a majority of the Senate, that required the phased redeployment of our troops to begin in 120 days.

Last week, a majority of Democrats supported ending the current open-ended mission by March 31, 2008. It has been almost 1 year since 13 Senators supported the proposal I offered with Senator KERRY that would have brought our troops out of Iraq by this summer. Now, 29 Senators support an even stronger measure, enforced by Congress's power of the purse, to safely redeploy our troops.

Unfortunately, after that strong vote, we are now moving backward. Instead of forcing the President to safely redeploy our troops, instead of coming up with a strategy providing assistance to a postredployment Iraq, and instead of a renewed focus on the global fight against al-Qaida, we are faced with a spending bill that just kicks the can down the road and buys the administration time.

But why, I ask you, would we buy the administration more time? Why should we wait any longer? Since the war began in March 2003, we have lost more than 3,420 Americans, with over 71 killed since the beginning of this month. Last month, we lost over 100 Americans. Last weekend, the media reported that 24 bodies were found lying in the streets of Baghdad, all of

whom had been killed execution style. Nineteen of them were found within parts of the city where the troops have "surged."

The administration's policy is clearly untenable. The American people know that, which is why they voted the way they did in November. They want us out of Iraq, and they want us out now. They don't want to give the so-called surge time. They don't want to pass this problem off to another President and another Congress. And they sure don't want another American service-member to die or lose a limb while elected representatives put their own political comfort over the wishes of their constituents.

It was bad enough to have the President again disregard the American people by escalating our involvement in Iraq. Now, too, Congress seems to be ignoring the will of the American people. If the American people cannot count on the leaders they elected to listen to them and to act on their demands, then something is seriously wrong with our political institutions or with the people who currently occupy those institutions.

I urge my colleagues to reject the weak supplemental conference report and to stand strong as we tell the administration it is time to end the war that is draining our resources, straining our military, and undermining our national security.

I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. OBAMA). The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

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

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

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, what is the pending business before the Senate?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority has 4 minutes left in morning business.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, on behalf of the majority, I yield back the time.

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

#### CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

#### COMPREHENSIVE IMMIGRATION REFORM ACT OF 2007

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of S. 1348, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 1348) to provide for comprehensive immigration reform and for other purposes.

Pending:

Reid (For Kennedy/Specter) amendment No. 1150, in the nature of a substitute.

Grassley/DeMint amendment No. 1166 to amendment No. 1150, to establish a permanent bar for gang members, terrorists, and other criminals.

Cornyn amendment No. 1184 (to amendment No. 1150), to establish a permanent bar for gang members, terrorists, and other criminals.

Coleman/Bond amendment No. 1158 to amendment No. 1150, to amend the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 to facilitate information sharing between federal and local law enforcement officials related to an individual's immigration status.

Akaka amendment No. 1186 to amendment No. 1150, to exempt children of certain Filipino World War II veterans from the numerical limitations on immigrant visas.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey is recognized.

AMENDMENT NO. 1158

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I would like to start this morning's debate on immigration by speaking to two of the pending amendments that are before the Senate. First, I would like to speak toward the Coleman amendment.

Under Senator COLEMAN's amendment, he would, in essence, undermine the rights of States and local municipalities which have instructed their police, health, and safety workers from inquiring about the immigration status of those they serve in order to protect the health and safety and promote the general welfare of the community.

As Ronald Reagan said: Here we go again. Over the last several years, particularly in the House of Representatives, there have been different pieces of legislation and amendments offered and debated that would deputize State and local police to enforce what is, in essence, Federal civil immigration law. The Coleman-Bond amendment would effectively prohibit State and local Government policies that seek to encourage crime reporting and witness cooperation by reassuring immigrant victims that police and other government officials will not inquire into their status.

So the amendment would send a mandate from Washington that would end State and local policies that prevent their employees, including police and health and safety workers, from inquiring about the immigration status of those they serve if there is "probable cause"—probable cause; exactly what standard we are going to use for that is still, in my mind, not quite defined—to believe the individual being questioned is undocumented.

Now, I have talked to some of the toughest law enforcement people across the country. Many cities, counties, and police departments around the country have decided that it is a matter of public health and safety not to ask, not to ask about the immigration status of people when they report crimes or have been the victims of domestic abuse or go to the hospital seeking emergency medical care.