

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak in morning business for up to 15 minutes. I believe Senator BINGAMAN wants to speak after that.

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

IRAQ AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, I would just say to my friend, Senator REID, the able Democratic majority leader in the Senate, that I hope we don't continue in a debate about the Iraq situation in ways that are destructive to our Nation but that we can conduct the debate in a positive way.

For example, I know there has been an intelligence report that has been produced, but it also had within it projections of things of a positive nature, some of which occurred and some of which didn't. It had within it projections of things of a negative nature that did not occur. Even with regard to its prediction of violence and persistent violence and sectarian strife that could occur that report predicted it would be phasing down after 3 or 4 years. So predictions are predictions.

I don't think those possibilities were not discussed in the debate leading up to our giving authorization to the President to conduct this war. To suggest that this intelligence report was some sort of smoking gun that raised issues nobody had even discussed, and that somehow the President misled the public, is wrong and it hurts the President of the United States, whoever he or she may be; and who, right now, we assume will be traveling the world and meeting with leaders of foreign nations. To make those kind of accusations is not healthy, in my view, and not responsible.

Now, we had a vote week before last, fortunately, to provide funding through the emergency supplemental for our soldiers, sailor, airmen and marines in Iraq. That was too long in my view, but we did it. And we voted to send General Petraeus to execute the surge that the President has called for, and that was the funding that we approved week before last to fund that surge. He is to give us a report in September on how the situation is in Iraq, and we are all watching with a great deal of anxiety because we are concerned about what is happening in Iraq. We know the United States has only limited ability to affect what we would like to occur there. We have done a great deal to help that nation establish itself, and we want to continue to utilize our resources wisely, but this was a surge and we need to evaluate the situation in September.

What I would urge my colleagues on the other side to do, even though they may be concerned about it, in the debate on the Defense authorization bill, and perhaps the Defense appropriations

bill that will occur later on this summer, we ought not to utilize rhetoric and language that undermines what our soldiers are doing right now, what we directed them to do, and what we have funded them to do, and that is to help create stability and more security for the people of Iraq. We ought not to debate in such a way that it makes it harder for them to succeed.

Don't we all want that to occur? Don't we all want to see a stable, decent Iraq occur? They have had elections, but they are having a very difficult time bringing that country together in a stable fashion, as we all know. So I would encourage my colleagues, in the course of the debate, that we conduct ourselves in such a way that we don't place at greater risk our soldiers and that we don't make our foreign policy that we have in a bipartisan way authorized more difficult to achieve and provide any ability for the enemy to think that they are able to prevail by lack of resolve on our part.

I want to spend a few minutes talking about the immigration bill that is before us. I think it is a critically important piece of legislation. The American people are concerned about it. They are following it quite closely. They know we have a difficult time in Iraq, and they do not expect an easy solution there. They know we have difficulties with energy prices and other difficulties, and they want us to do what we can in that regard.

With regard to immigration, they are rightly of the view that we can do something about it. We can create a lawful system of immigration that serves our national interest if we desire to do so. If we, as a Congress and the executive branch, want this to happen, we can make it happen. Don't let anybody suggest otherwise. It is not impossible. It is absolutely possible, and we ought to be working on that. That is what they have asked us to do, and I hope we will.

Let me just mention the debate so far has been sporadic and desultory. Members have not had a chance to be very engaged in the matter. We were off last week for Memorial Day, but the week before that we were in debate on the bill. The week before that, the old bill, last year's failed bill, was introduced and sat on the calendar until Tuesday morning of the week before the recess. They then plopped down a complete substitute, a completely new bill last Tuesday.

On Monday, we talked about immigration. I talked about it at some length, but there were no Senators here, really. The only vote we had was on the motion to proceed to the new bill. We had a mere six roll call votes last week, and we didn't do anything Friday even though we were in session. A few hardy souls, myself included, came down and spoke, but nobody was here to really listen. There were no votes, and most Senators had already gone home for the recess.

Here we are again, now on the Monday after recess, with very few Senators here and no votes scheduled for today. All of these days though, even though we did not do anything, are going to be counted, you see, as time we spend analyzing and amending the immigration bill that is before us.

I suggest that at this painfully slow pace of amendments, the bill can't be done this week, that we need a great deal more time on this bill before final passage.

The way the bill was brought up was that our colleague, Senator REID, under rule XIV, just introduced it and immediately brought it up. It did not go to committee. It was brought straight to the floor. It really had only been written over the weekend, and, bam, here it was on the floor. Senator REID really wanted to pass it the first week it was on the floor, but there was a lot of push-back on that, and now we are into this week of debate.

I see from his comments today that the majority leader seems to think the bill can pass this week. I suggest it cannot. There is no way it can be done in a week. I think 100 amendments have been filed. To get one brought up, though, is not easy. You have to basically get the consent of the majority leader to get an amendment brought up and made pending. So there are not nearly so many pending as there are problems that need to be fixed.

There are flaws in the legislation. I am going to talk about those at some length. I will be talking about at least 20 serious flaws in this legislation, but I do not want that to suggest that flaws alone are the only problems with the legislation. In this bill, we do not have a principled approach to the future flow of immigrants into America, that is not a loophole, that is a major flaw. We have not thought through philosophically what we want to do about immigration. We have not made the real commitment I had hoped we would to a more merit-based, skill-based immigration system. I am concerned about all of that. I think the American people are too.

The administration and Senator KENNEDY and the others who promoted the legislation talked about some principles as a part of talking points they handed out as the foundation for immigration legislation they would be offering. I first say to my colleagues, the bill does not meet the promises contained in those talking points and those principles. It just simply does not. If it did, we would be in much better shape than we are today, because many of those principles were sound. It contains, as I will note, a host of fundamental, serious defects and flaws that make the legislation not one that ought to be passed now.

Finally, I still do not believe the White House and the Congress have heard the American people. They still think we can pass a piece of legislation here on the floor of the Congress, and we can push it through and get it off