

Everyone acknowledges we need earmark reform, and the Appropriations Committee has been following that this year. Senators BYRD and COCHRAN have made that direction, even though the legislation has not been completed. But in the meantime, we do not have lobbying and ethics reform, which is long past due. So I hope we can work together to complete our work in a timely fashion; otherwise, it will be finished in an untimely fashion because we are going to finish all this work before we have our August recess.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I withhold that suggestion.

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

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I have been reminded by staff that of our 30 minutes the Democrats are allotted of the 60 minutes, 30 minutes of our time—in fact, all of it—be given to Senator FEINSTEIN.

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

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

Mr. REID. 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.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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

IRAQ

Mr. REID. Mr. President, after 52 months—about 210 weeks—and about 1,500 days, America finds itself mired in one of the most tragic foreign policy blunders in our Nation's history. The sad part about it is, there is no end in sight. In my view, and that of academics and others, it will take years, and even decades, to finally close the book on the damage this war has caused our troops, our economy, and our moral standing in the world.

On May 24, 2007, President Bush said:

We are there at the invitation of the Iraqi government. This is a sovereign nation. Twelve million people went to the polls to approve a constitution. It's their government's choice. If they were to say leave, we would leave.

That is the quote of President Bush.

This weekend, Iraqi Prime Minister al-Maliki—for whom President Bush has expressed consistent support and confidence—said that Iraqi forces could take control of their security at “any

time” American troops want to leave or were to leave.

A recent poll of the Iraqi people showed that 21 percent think the American presence makes their country safer, while 69 percent say it puts them, the Iraqi people, at greater risk. That is what the Iraqis say.

The Iraqi people and their leaders say they are ready for us to end our combat operation. I think it is time we listen to them.

In the war's soon to be 5 years, our troops have accomplished everything they have been asked to do. They took down the Iraqi dictator. They secured the country for not one, not two, but three elections. They provided the security needed for Iraqi factions to come together to negotiate peaceful settlement of their differences.

But the Iraqi leaders have not done their part. After these 52 months: more than 3,600 Americans killed, tens of thousands wounded, and after nearly \$600 billion of American taxpayer dollars spent. And after this sacrifice—52 months of sacrifice—it is long past time for the Iraqi leaders and the Iraqi people to put their words into action by taking responsibility for their own future. After 52 months, more than 3,600 Americans killed, tens of thousands wounded, and nearly 600 billion in taxpayer dollars spent, President Bush continues to tell our troops and all Americans that we should wait it out, just stay the course. After 52 months, our troops and our security cannot afford the President's “run-out-the-clock” strategy.

We have an opportunity and an obligation to change course in Iraq right now. We can remove our brave troops from the front lines of another country's civil war, a conflict we have no business policing and little chance to diffuse. We can conduct the kind of tough and strong diplomacy required to stabilize Iraq and the region, which even the President's own military experts plead with him to revise. Remember, General Petraeus has said the war cannot be won militarily. We can refocus our resources and fight a real war on terror that drives the terrorists back to the darkest caves and corners of the Earth.

We can choose that path now. We don't have to mark time waiting for the President to wake up one morning with a change of heart or his term to run out. We don't have to wait 2 more months for an arbitrary September deadline when it is so clear a course change is required and required now. With our courage and our votes, we can rise above the tragic failure to deliver a new course that our brave troops and all Americans demand and deserve. We can do that today by voting for the Levin-Reed amendment to the Defense authorization bill.

What does Levin-Reed do? It sets a firm date and an end date to transition the mission and begin the reduction of U.S. forces beginning 120 days after enactment and completed by April 30 of

2008. Levin-Reed limits the U.S. military mission after April 30 to counterterrorism; the training of Iraqi security forces and protection of U.S. personnel and assets; requires that the reduction in forces be part of a comprehensive, diplomatic, regional, political, and economic effort; and appoints an international mediator to bring together the warring factions. That provision dealing with appointing an international mediator to bring together warring factions was newly placed in the bill. The idea and the language came from Senator HAGEL of Nebraska and is a great addition to this amendment.

To those who say this language is binding on the President, I say it is, and that is what it is meant to be. It is binding because the President has resisted every effort we have made to work with him to change the direction of his failed Iraq policy. The record will show that binding language was not our first choice. We passed legislation requiring that 2006 be a year of transition. Instead, the President ignored this language and dug us in even deeper into an intractable civil war. We gave the President a chance to develop his own new course as Commander in Chief. He refused to do that. Instead, he chose to extend deployments and ask even more of our brave men and women in uniform.

Earlier this year we passed legislation that would have begun the phased redeployment while leaving significant discretion to the President about how and when to execute the redeployment. Instead, the President vetoed this bill and asserted that only he had the power to set war policy, even though we have a constitutional obligation to do so.

So the record is clear, the President's decision to stubbornly cling to the current course leaves this body no choice but to enact binding language. He has failed to lead us out of Iraq. We are ready to show him the way.

I am going to propound a unanimous consent. I have the greatest respect for my friend, the distinguished junior Senator from Arizona, but I say that I am going to enforce the rule that when I propound this, the distinguished Senator from Arizona should either agree to it or object. This is not the time for speeches because if he objects to it, I have more to say.

So I ask unanimous consent that if the House further amends H.R. 1 with the text of H.R. 1401 and requests a conference with the Senate—Mr. President, I misread the first line. I ask unanimous consent that if the House further amends H.R. 1 with the text of H.R. 1401 and requests a conference with the Senate, that the Senate agree to the request and appoint the same conferees which the Senate has already appointed to H.R. 1.

Mr. KYL addressed the Chair.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, if the Senator could withhold.

I withdraw the unanimous consent request.