

five amendments, the Republicans would waste one of their chances to change a broken policy by choosing instead to embrace a political stunt.

We are where we are. I vehemently oppose the kind of political abuse of the Senate embodied in the Cornyn amendment, and I am saddened if not surprised to see that so many of the Republicans who believe that what happened to General Petraeus was wrong, could not bring themselves to vote for the Boxer amendment which made clear that the assault on Senator Cleland's patriotism in 2002 was wrong, and that the lies broadcast about my own military record in 2004 were also wrong. The votes against the Boxer amendment—an amendment which makes clear our disagreement with the ad which ran September 10—speak volumes about the partisan motivations behind the Cornyn amendment, and the fact that, apparently, many of our colleagues believe that attacking the integrity of veterans and members of the military is fair game as long as they are Democrats. I would remind them that when you sign up for military duty, no one asks whether you are a Democrat or Republican, liberal, or conservative.

Over the last years, I have defended veterans who have been under assault from any quarters, left or right. I spoke out in 2000 when JOHN MCCAIN's integrity and military record was questioned by the Bush campaign in South Carolina. I spoke out when Max Cleland's patriotism was savaged by people who had never worn the uniform. I defended Jack Murtha when vicious partisans on the right called that decorated marine a "coward." I spoke out when the Bush administration questioned the patriotism of career military men and Generals throughout the war in Iraq, whether it was General Shinseki, or many in uniform who spoke out against Secretary Rumsfeld. I don't reserve my defense of patriotism for Democrats, I defend all who have worn the uniform, whether they agree with me or not. I wish I could say the same for those who brought forward the Cornyn amendment and voted against the Boxer amendment.

This was not a proud day in the Senate, or a high mark in our politics; rather, it was hours lost and time wasted when the Senate should have delivered what all the men and women of the armed forces truly deserve: a policy equal to their sacrifice.

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, I opposed the amendments offered by Senators CORNYN and BOXER because they were a diversion from the real issue before us; namely, the future of our military involvement in Iraq. I disagreed with the language used in all of the ads addressed in these amendments, but we should not let those ads sidetrack the real work of the Senate. I hope the Senate will not get in the habit of condemning political speech, even speech that is offensive.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now proceed to a period of morning business.

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

CHILDREN'S HEALTH INSURANCE

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, earlier today, the President announced his intention to veto the extension of the Children's Health Insurance Program bill. I believe such a veto would be a terrible mistake.

One of the very first bills I cosponsored when I first came to the Senate was legislation to create the State Children's Health Insurance Program, or SCHIP as it has become known. It provides health care coverage for children in families where the parents do not have sufficient income to purchase health insurance and are not getting health insurance in the workplace, and yet they make a bit too much money to qualify for coverage under the State's Medicaid program. So these low-income children in working families have been falling through the cracks. That is why this law has been so important.

I remember it well that Senator HATCH, Senator KENNEDY, and Senator ROCKEFELLER all came up to me to enlist my support. I was very eager to sign on as one of the original cosponsors of this law because I knew it could make such a positive difference. Indeed, it has.

Since 1997, the SCHIP program has contributed to a one-third decline in the rate of uninsured low-income children. Today, an estimated 6.6 million children, including more than 14,500 children living in Maine, receive health care coverage through this program. Still, there is more we could do.

While Maine ranks among the top four States in reducing the number of uninsured children, we still have more than 20,000 children in our State who lack coverage. Nationally, about 9 million children remain uninsured. That is why I was so pleased to hear the conferees appeared to be very near to an agreement that is modeled on the legislation that passed the Senate in August with strong bipartisan support, in fact, by a vote of 68 to 31.

Our Senate bill increases funding for the SCHIP program by \$35 million over the next 5 years, a level that is sufficient to maintain coverage for all 6.6 million children currently enrolled, and it would also allow the program to expand to cover an additional 3.3 million low-income children. In Maine, this legislation would allow us to cover an additional 11,000 low-income children who are currently eligible for the SCHIP program but not enrolled.

I urge the administration to take a second look at the Senate bill, the bill that is the basis for the conference agreement. This legislation has made a

real difference in the lives of working families with low-income children across this country. It is helping to ensure these children grow up to be healthy adults. Surely, we can get this done on a bipartisan basis before the program is scheduled to expire on September 30.

I urge the President of the United States to reconsider his threat to veto this vital program, this highly successful program that has a proven track record of reducing the number of children who lack health insurance. If the President does proceed to veto the bill, I will vote to override his veto. Surely, this bill has a track record that has made a real difference to low-income children in working families. We simply cannot allow this program to expire. The extension and expansion we are proposing will enable us to more fully cover these children.

TRIBUTE TO LIEUTENANT COLONEL GEORGE SHERMAN

Mr. REID. Mr. President, on Wednesday, September 5, 2007, the State of Nevada and our Nation lost a true hero: Retired U.S. Army Air Corp LTC George Sherman, who served our Nation during World War II as a member of the famed Tuskegee Airmen.

Like so many African-American soldiers during that time, Colonel Sherman answered the call to fight for freedom and justice abroad, even when it was categorically denied at home. These men traveled and fought thousands of miles from their families—when every day, their mothers, fathers, sisters and brothers faced injustice at home.

While our Nation can never fully repay the debt to our veterans, in March of this year Congress officially thanked Colonel Sherman and his fellow Tuskegee Airmen for their service to our Nation. Colonel Sherman joined nearly 300 other Tuskegee Airmen in the Capitol Rotunda as thousands watched President Bush and leaders from the House and Senate award them the Congressional Gold Medal.

Colonel Sherman and the Tuskegee Airmen were in prestigious company in receiving the highest honor our Nation can bestow upon private citizens. Other honorees include individuals such as President Harry Truman, Jackie Robinson, Reverend Billy Graham, Rosa Parks, and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

I was pleased to have the opportunity to watch Colonel Sherman and his fellow Tuskegee Airmen proudly take their place among all American heroes. Yet in addition to their accomplishments as Tuskegee Airmen, Colonel Sherman and many others continued to serve their country and local communities.

Colonel Sherman had a long record of service to Nevada. After 22 years of military service, he made his home in Las Vegas. Colonel Sherman was a tireless supporter of the Boy Scouts of America, where he earned the highest