

No. 1 priority, as they should be. Instead, partisan politics appear to be the No. 1 priority, and those children appear to be something left behind.

I yield the floor.

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

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent for the rest of the Democratic time in morning business.

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

REPUBLICAN OBSTRUCTIONISM

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, right up the street from here, right up Pennsylvania Avenue, is the White House. It is not far, a little over a mile. But what has been made abundantly clear over the past 10 months since Congress changed hands, what has been made abundantly clear is that when it comes to the priorities of the families of this Nation, when it comes to the values they hold, the distance between here and the White House is many miles.

Americans have seen for themselves what we in Congress want to do for them. They have seen some truly meaningful and landmark initiatives achieved on behalf of American families: The 9/11 Commission bill, bringing security to all our communities; the most sweeping ethics reform in a generation, extracting lobbying influence from the policies that affect all of us; the first increase in the minimum wage, the first raise for American workers in more than a decade; and the most significant college affordability package since the GI bill, because we recognize that a good education is the great equalizer.

But that is not all we are trying to do for middle-class Americans, for working Americans, for families in this country. That is the tip of the iceberg. We want to help American families by investing in security, education, and health care, and we have legislation to do that. Yes, there will be plenty more ideas, plenty more initiatives, plenty more investments in the people of this country whom we stand together to support but only to have the President and his friends in Congress block our progress.

Time after time, a majority of the Members of this body have lined up behind truly important legislation, only to have the President take out his veto pen or our Republican colleagues in the Senate strike up a filibuster.

Yesterday I saw President Bush, flanked by some of his top allies from Congress, complaining about what he claims Congress has not done this year. It takes a lot of nerve for the President to say that, when he received from this Congress landmark security legislation, landmark education legislation, landmark ethics reforms, and the first minimum wage raise in a decade. He signed them all into law, all within 10 months.

It takes a lot of nerve for President Bush to say we are wasting time, when

he, along with his allies, has refused the children's health legislation, stem cell research legislation, and legislation to change the course in Iraq.

I know it is Halloween, but the legislative graveyard for which the President is the grim reaper is not a trick or a treat. It is downright scary that the President can be so disconnected from the values and hopes of mainstream America.

Ask the American people: What would they rather us do in Washington—stand up for lifesaving research, lower energy costs, get our troops out of Iraq or kill initiative after initiative that would benefit American families? In Congress, we are going to try to give the President what we call in golf a mulligan on one of the most important investments we can make in our country, the health of our children. The first time, he vetoes it, sending the message that millions of children who have nowhere else to turn are unworthy of a strong Federal commitment.

We believe that is fundamentally wrong. The President has to choose if he is going to sign it into law or again write a big "no" on an investment in America's children. This is a President who says, no, no, no, when it comes to investing in our families, but yes, yes, yes, when it comes to more troops, more time, more money for his stay-the-course plan in Iraq.

This is a President who does not see the irony in sticking out the one hand to ask for \$200 billion for Iraq this year, while using the other hand to veto health coverage for poor American children. This is a President who has no problem with killing a child's health bill that would have been paid for with 3½ months of Iraq funding. This is a President who says: We are fighting them over there so we do not have to fight them over here, when what he means is: We are spending all our money over there, and we do not have it to spend here.

In Congress, we want a strong investment in children's health care, in stem cell research, in changing the course in Iraq. We have offered those to the President. He has rejected it. The President and his allies seem to want to stay the course in Iraq and not much else.

Well, America is going to see a lot of ghouls and goblins tonight. But what is truly scary is that the legislative grim reaper that threatens millions of families without health care insurance, the demon of oil addiction, and the specter of an endless war, are not going to be gone when we wake up. That is the reality we face. That is why we continue to challenge to change the course.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BROWN. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. DORGAN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BROWN. I ask unanimous consent to speak for no more than 5 minutes as in morning business.

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

CONSUMER PRODUCT SAFETY COMMISSION

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, our Nation's haphazard trade policy too often allows contaminated food and dangerous toys onto our shelves and into our homes, and this administration has done little to curb the toxic tide.

Earlier this month, I asked Ohio's Ashland University chemistry Professor Jeff Weidenhamer to test 22 Halloween products for lead. Three products tested were found to contain high lead levels. Acceptable levels of lead, according to the Consumer Product Safety Commission, are 600 parts per million for adults. According to CPSC, there is no acceptable lead level for children. A Halloween Frankenstein cup that Professor Weidenhamer tested—presumably a cup that may end up in a child's mouth—contained 39,000 parts per million versus 600, which is acceptable for an adult, and zero acceptable for a child.

For more than 40 years, parents trusted that their children's toys were safe from lead. The safety net secured to help our families is being systematically dismantled, as the Presiding Officer, the Senator from North Dakota, has pointed out so well, by our Nation's failed trade policies and an apathetic administration. Forty years ago, we banned lead in paint. Now we must ban lead in toys. I am a cosponsor of legislation with Senator OBAMA that would do that.

While a ban on lead in toys is an important step, it doesn't get at the heart of the problem—our failed trade policy. Until we get tough on enforcing safety standards abroad, we won't be able to prevent contaminated products from ending up on store shelves across the country and in our homes.

Distributors seeking low-cost products stretch supply chains to China and cut costs; that is, American companies that import go to China and other countries and push them to cut costs, to cut corners, and then those products are brought back into the United States. That means lead paint in toys because it is cheaper to buy and to apply, it means too often contaminated products in our homes, and it means zero accountability.

We have not made the importers, the contractors, or the Government accountable because of cuts at the Consumer Product Safety Commission and because we have a top Commissioner there who has simply weakened that agency and abdicated responsibility. As yesterday's report highlighted, we must do more to ensure the Consumer Product Safety Commission has what it needs to do its job.