

should use our military forces to defend America and use our “shining city on a hill,” which President Reagan talked about so often, as an example to spread freedom. If we must become involved in another country, as we are in Iraq and Afghanistan, then we must have a compelling reason, a clear mission, an overwhelming force to make certain we reach our goals.

The second lesson is this: In order to reach those goals, we have to persuade the American people to have the stomach to see the mission we have adopted all the way through to the end. It is much better if the President and the Congress, even if they are of different political parties, agree on that mission. Technically, the Commander in Chief can wage a war, leaving us not much to do but fund the troops, which almost all of us, regardless of party, do. We saw in Iraq the failure to agree between the President and the Congress—which made the war harder and longer and President Bush’s presidency much less successful. We were in the position often of being the oldest democracy lecturing Baghdad, an infant democracy, for not coming up with a political solution when we ourselves could not come up with one.

Finally, we learned a lesson in Iraq about how to honor those who serve our country. Sometimes in airports now—unlike in the Vietnam era—passengers burst into applause when a group of service men and women appear. A great many Tennesseans have been to Iraq and Afghanistan. More are going this week to Afghanistan. Many have served two or three tours already—including men and women from the Tennessee National Guard and the 101st Airborne—and 100 have given their lives in Iraq and Afghanistan. Hundreds have suffered wounds that will change their lives. They have performed heroically. I am glad to see that after 6 years, we finally seem to be united on a path which will bring the war to successful conclusion and hasten the time when most of those serving can come home. But it is disappointing that we did not take the advantage 2 years ago when we might have done it to agree on the principles of the Iraq Study Group. We had that opportunity. It might have shortened the war. It might have stabilized Iraq more rapidly. It might have saved lives.

We should remember that as we look ahead to Afghanistan. We do not want

to succeed Bush’s war with Obama’s war. Whenever we go to war, it should be an American war and the President should make certain he has bipartisan support in Congress.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, during the 1960s, American Motors Corporation president George Romney warned Detroit’s automakers, “There is nothing more vulnerable than entrenched success.”

The big three paid no attention. They were building the best cars in the world—highly profitable gas-guzzling vehicles we were quick to buy. Meanwhile, their future Japanese competitors were perfecting smaller, fuel-efficient cars. And today we are bailing out the Detroit companies that did not listen.

American higher education would do well to heed the warning that George Romney gave the Detroit automakers in the 1960s. We have the best colleges in the world today, just as we had the best cars in the world then. But even brisk competition at home seems to have little effect on rising tuition costs.

To deal with rising college costs, I suggest, No. 1, colleges offer some well-prepared students the option of a 3-year baccalaureate degree, cutting one-third the time and one-fourth the cost from a college education; and No. 2, make community college free for well-prepared students.

This seems impossible when State community college funding is tight. In my State, Vanderbilt’s endowment has declined 16.5 percent and Maryville College is under a hiring freeze. The University of Tennessee is trying to decide what positions to cut. Impossible, that is, unless college administrators are listening to students, States, and Members of Congress who are up in arms about rising tuition.

What I hear in Congress is: Every time we increase Pell grants, colleges raise tuition. In their exasperation, Members of Congress then piled new rules on already overregulated colleges. The former president of Stanford University estimates complying with these regulations—which today fill a stack of boxes 6 feet tall, which I have previously brought onto the Senate floor—adds 7 cents to every dollar cost of tuition. Last year, I even voted

against the new higher education bill because it doubles those regulations.

The greatest threat to the quality of higher education, in my opinion, is not underfunding, it is overregulation. But to persuade other Members of the Senate and the House of Representatives to stop adding these stacks of regulations, colleges are first going to have to show that they know how to lower college costs.

Just as a plug-in hybrid car is not for every driver, a 3-year college degree is not for every student. But some well-qualified students may want to complete their work in 3 years—many today take 5 or 6 years—and in doing so save time and save money. This will require adjusting attitudes, faculty workloads, and using some campus facilities year round.

Five upper East Tennessee counties already are offering free tuition to qualified local students at Northeast State Community College. Federal Pell grants and the State HOPE Scholarship pay most of the \$1,300 semester tuition. The five counties and private companies pay the rest. Sullivan County’s bill last year was only \$80,000 for its share.

These are very difficult times. We all know that here. But during the 1980s, when I was Governor of Tennessee, unemployment reached 11 percent, inflation reached 14 percent, and interest rates reached 20 percent. We were struggling then. Then the economy surged, as we hope it will soon again. Tennessee’s higher education funding growth led the Nation for 3 consecutive years. This is more likely to happen again if higher education offers a 3-year college degree option and free community college tuition. That will help regain the support of legislators and families who are upset about colleges that seem able only to increase tuition every time legislators increase funding.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 10 A.M. TOMORROW

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 6:45 p.m., adjourned until Tuesday, March 3, 2009, at 10 a.m.