I worked on this situation

a long time. I appreciate the Senator

from Georgia coming, lending your

prestige, I underscore that, on this

very important issue. As the Senator

said, this is a simple issue, whether

someone who has put in his time in the

military, whether it is 10 or 20 or whatever

years it is—20 or 30—whatever it

is, and then, I say to my friend from

Georgia, the distinguished Senator,

then finds himself, because he has a

disability—it could be 100 percent or

whatever percent disability—he has to

make a choice. He can’t get both pensions,

both of which are earned.

If there were ever an example of how

a country owes this to these people,

this is it. I say to my friend from Georgia,

thank you very much. The Senator

from Georgia, I know, as I do, goes to

VFW halls and the other veterans’ organizations,

and we see there large

numbers of World War II veterans. I am

not happy to say this, but a thousand

are dying every day. These men—and

very few women, from World War II; as

we went back, there were more women

involved—deserve this. As in Korea. I

have a friend the Senator from Georgia

knows, who was my high school teacher,

the Governor of the State of Nevada,

who lost a limb in Korea. He had

to make a choice. He cannot do both.

He spent time in the Air Force, in the

Marines, in the Army and, under this

goofy law he cannot draw both pensions

if, in fact, he was entitled to

them.

This is just senseless. So I appreciate

very much the Senator from Georgia

recognizing the importance of this and

lending his prestige.

No one can come and speak on veterans’

matters with more authority

than the Senator from Georgia. I say

to the Senator, not only have you received

injuries, but you are also the

person who ran the Department of Veterans

Affairs. You have seen it from all

sides. I appreciate very much your

being here, helping on this legislation

the conference committee must approve.

It is simply just unfair if they

do not.

The Senator is right

in his sense of being absolutely dumbfounded

by this. I am absolutely perplexed.

Mr. President, if I could

respond very quickly.

Senator BYRD has been here—and I

say this with dignity and respect—and

he has given us so many lectures on

the Constitution. I have listened. I believe

in the Constitution. We are a separate

and equal branch of Government.

The President cannot tell us what happens

in conference. He can offer his

opinion.

I say this, as I said yesterday, the

President cannot sustain a veto on this

matter. He cannot sustain a veto. I

would put up before this body, any

time, my veterans compared to the

people who surround the President.

So I say to my friend from Virginia,

a man of courage, integrity, and, as I

said yesterday, a gentleman, hang in

there. We are the third branch of Government.

We deserve to be able to do

what we have passed in this body. We

cannot let the administration cow us

on this because we are right. If he vetoes

it, we will override the President.

The Senator will recall

yesterday, on the floor, I said, I do not

think the President knows what the

people are saying. I think if the President

really knew what people were saying—

we are robbing Peter to pay Paul

on people who have injuries, people

who are disabled because of their service

in the military—I do not think the

President would do that. I hope not.

That is what I heard coming from the

distinguished Senator from Delaware,

that I do not think this is President

Bush’s personality; at least I hope not.

I say, though, to my friend, as I said

yesterday, I really do believe a person

who is injured in combat—and I cannot

speak from experience, as can my

friends, such as Senator KERRY, Senator

INOUYE, and Senator CLELAND,

what combat is like. I do not really

know. But I do know people who have

disabilities in the military. No matter

how they received those disabilities, I

believe they are entitled to that disability

payment. I think it may be an

easy way out for some to just say:

Well, if you are injured in combat, you

are entitled to your disability pay, but

if you are injured on the back lines by

a tank running over you, or a truck

hitting you, or falling off a truck doing

work to take care of those people on

the front lines, then you are not. But I

say, whether that person is 3,000 miles

away or 30,000 miles away from the

front lines, I think they are entitled to

that compensation for disability just

as well as someone else. That is a comment

I make to my friend from Virginia

prior to your making a decision

in that conference.