

Senator Dianne Feinstein:

Mr. President, I thank you very much.

I particularly salute the Senator from Maryland. I thank her for her leadership of our group of Democratic women. Senator Mikulski has, from the get-go, been there for the women of the Senate. This is the second time I have participated in this Checklist for Change, which she has put together.

I also salute Senator McCaskill, who was on the floor, who has brought a very talented dimension to our group of women.

I think, as the other Democratic women as well come to the floor to discuss this Checklist for Change, you are going to see one thing; and that one thing is, we are all very committed to this country and very committed to see this country do the right thing by her people.

So it is with a great deal of pleasure that I participate in this effort. I thank both of them and the women who will come after me speaking as well.

My comments are forged by 15 years on the Senate Judiciary Committee. With the exception of Senator Moseley-Braun for a short period of time, I am the only woman who has served in history on the Judiciary Committee of the Senate and also serving 7 years as a member of the Intelligence Committee.

I have always taken great stock in the fact that the United States of America has been a beacon of hope because people all over the world look to American justice and American human rights for inspiration.

We have represented not only a brighter future for people, but we have represented a government of law, a government under the Constitution, a government by the people, for the people, with justice for all--not just for a certain few but all.

Now that beacon has been dimmed. Despite President Bush's promise that the United States would fight the war on terror consistent with American values and "in the finest traditions of valor," the decision was made, as Vice President Cheney said in 2001, to "go to the dark side."

Indeed, this administration has put our Nation on the wrong track in so many ways, including: creating a prisoner of war detention facility at Guantanamo Bay with a separate, lesser system of justice--now repudiated by the Supreme Court; authorizing interrogation techniques that constitute torture; reopening the nuclear door by seeking to develop low-yield battlefield nuclear weapons and 100-kiloton nuclear bunker busters; countenancing, for the first time, the use of nuclear weapons as a first strike against a nonnuclear threat, if chemical or biological weapons were threatened--not used but threatened--against the United States; preemptively invading Iraq, under the guise of weapons of mass destruction and a false nexus to al-Qaida.

So, today, we see America's credibility in the world diminished, and the administration's policies have become a recruiting tool for our enemies. So, in 7 1/2 years, this great country has gone from a nation embraced to a nation often tarnished.

Yes, the time has come for a change. The time has come to: lay out an exit strategy in Iraq so we can begin to bring our people home; close Guantanamo, shut it down. The Secretary of Defense says shut it down. The former Secretary of State says shut it down. Governor Kean, Congressman Hamilton, a litany of four-star officers and flag officers have said shut it down. It does not become America's values.

The time has come to stop America's use of torture; establish a uniform standard for detentions and interrogations across our Government. This is part of the Senate's Intelligence authorization bill, and it will remain part of this bill. That bill essentially says all elements of the American Government will utilize the Army Field Manual and the procedures therein, both the prohibitions on eight specific items of torture as well as specific techniques to move ahead.

The time has come to use robust diplomacy; create coalitions; listen to allies; talk with adversaries. This makes us stronger, not weaker.

The time has come to develop a new, sensible nuclear weapons policy, so we do not encourage the very kind of proliferation we seek to prevent.

Yes, the time has come for change. The time has come to restore America's credibility as a moral and just nation, dedicated to liberty and justice.

We are the greatest military and economic power the world has ever seen. Our global influence is unmatched. For the past half century, our country has embraced international cooperation, not out of vulnerability or weakness but from a position of strength.

Mr. President, if I can finish with this last statement.

Our strength as a nation emanates not just from our power but from our moral stature and our principled stand for truth, justice, and freedom. It must be restored.

I say to the Presiding Officer, thank you for your indulgence.