

LCpl Shawn V. Starkovich of Arlington, VA;
 SGT John R. Massey of Judsonia, AR;
 PFC Benjamin B. Bartlett Junior of Manchester, GA;
 SPC Robert D. Varga of Monroe City, MO;
 PFC Christopher D. Kube of Sterling Heights, MI;
 SGT Allen A. Greka of Alpena, MI;
 SGT Courtney T. Johnson of Garner, NC;
 1SG Jeffrey R. McKinney of Garland, TX;
 CAPT Maria I. Ortiz of Bayamon, Puerto Rico;
 SGT Eric A. Lill of Chicago, IL;
 MSG Randy J. Gillespie of Coaldale, CO;
 CPL Kory D. Wiens of Independence, OR;
 PFC Bruce C. Salazar Junior of Tracy, CA;
 SGT Gene L. Lamie of Homerville, GA;
 PFC Le Ron A. Wilson of Queens, NY;
 CPL Jeremy D. Allbaugh of Luther, OK;
 LCpl Steven A. Stacy of Coos Bay, OR;
 LCpl Angel R. Ramirez of Brooklyn, NY;
 COL Jon M. Lockey of Fredericksburg, VA;
 SFC Sean K. Mitchell of Monterey, CA;
 PFC Jason E. Dore of Moscow, ME;
 SPC Jeremy L. Stacey of Bismarck, AR;
 SPC Anthony M.K. Vinnedge of Okeana, OH;
 SPC Roberto J. Causor Junior of San Jose, CA;
 SPC Michelle R. Ring, of Martin, TN;
 MAJ James M. Ahearn, CA;
 SGT Keith A. Kline of Oak Harbor, OH;
 SPC Christopher S. Honaker of Cleveland, NC;
 PFC Joseph A. Miracle of Ortonville, MI;
 SGT Thomas P. McGee of Hawthorne, CA;
 PO1 Jason Dale Lewis of Brookfield, CT;
 PO1 Robert Richard McRill of Lake Placid, FL;
 PO1 Steven Phillip Daugherty of Barstow, Ca;
 CWO Scott A.M. Oswell, WA;
 PFC Andrew T. Engstrom of Slaton, TX;
 PFC Steven A. Davis of Woodbridge, VA;
 1LT Christopher N. Rutherford of Newport, OH;
 LCpl William C. Chambers of Ringgold, GA;
 LCpl Jeremy L. Tinnel of Mechanicsville, VA;
 LCpl Juan M. Garcia Schill of Grants Pass, OR;
 SFC Raymond R. Buchan of Johnstown, PA;
 SSG Michael L. Ruoff Junior of Yosemite, CA;
 SPC Victor A. Garcia of Rialto, CA;
 PFC Jonathan M. Rossi of Safety Harbor, FL.

To date, more than 3,600 American men and women have lost their lives in Iraq. And more than 400 have lost their lives in Afghanistan. We will not forget them and the Nation will not forget their sacrifice.

COURT SECURITY IMPROVEMENT ACT

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, one of the first actions I took this year was to reintroduce the Court Security Improvement Act of 2007, S. 378, on January 24, 2007. This bipartisan bill has a dozen cosponsors here in the Senate. In February we held a Judiciary Committee hearing at which we heard from Justice Anthony Kennedy. In March the Judiciary Committee considered and then reported the bill by unanimous consent.

I thank the majority leader and the assistant majority leader for their in-

terest in these matters. Each has witnessed violence against judges in their home States. With their leadership, in April the Senate was called upon to consider the measure. I was amazed when it took a cloture motion to proceed to consideration of court security. Cloture on the motion to proceed was obtained by a vote of 93 to 3. Thereafter, this important measure was considered and passed by the Senate on April 19 by a unanimous vote of 97 to 0. Not a single Senator voted against it, not even those Senators who objected to proceeding to the bill initially or the three Senators who voted against cloture on the motion to proceed.

A companion bill was considered by the House of Representatives and passed on a voice vote. To resolve the remaining difference between the Senate-passed measure and the House-passed measure we sought to substitute the Senate-passed text into the House bill and to request a House-Senate conference. This is hardly a novel procedure. It is a standard way to resolve differences and to complete action on legislation. This routine request has cleared the Democratic side of the aisle here in the Senate. No Democratic Senator has objected to proceeding. But, once again, an anonymous objection on the Republican side is thwarting progress. Just as Republican Senators objected to proceeding to consider legislation to bolster court security in April, now, an anonymous Republican objection is preventing the Senate from acting, requesting a conference and moving forward to resolve the differences and enact this long overdue legislation. Despite the broad bipartisan support for both the Senate bill and for the House bill, we are being blocked from going to conference to resolve the minor differences between them by an anonymous Republican Senator.

This obstruction delays the useful provisions in these bills and threatens important safety measures for our Federal judges and their families. For our justice system to function, our judges must be able to dispense justice. They and their families must be free from the fear of retaliation. Witnesses who come forward must be protected, and the courthouses where our laws are enforced must be secure. We are in danger of letting this chance to improve the security of our Federal courts slip through our fingers. I am disappointed and troubled that we will not be improving the security for our Federal judges and courthouses around the Nation before we go into recess.

I hope that the Republican Senator who has placed this anonymous objection would remove it, to let us go to conference, and to let us improve the security that our Federal courts need.

BRIDGE DISASTER RELIEF

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, I would like to enter into a brief colloquy with my colleague on the Environment and

Public Works Committee regarding his understanding of congressional intent for monies authorized in the pending Minnesota, bridge disaster relief bill.

I want to clarify that this authorization comes from the general fund rather than the Highway Trust Fund. Is that your understanding?

Mr. INHOFE. If the chairman will yield, I concur completely with your understanding. As I read the language, it clearly comes from the general fund and not the Highway Trust Fund. Given the precarious situation with Highway Trust Fund finances, it would be a mistake to place further burdens on it, and as per SAFETEA-LU, all additional emergency repairs come from the general fund.

Mr. BAUCUS. I thank my colleague for his concurrence.

ASSISTANCE FOR ETHIOPIA

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, after the overthrow of Ethiopia's brutal former Prime Minister Mengistu, Prime Minister Meles Zenawi ushered in a period of hope and optimism. On May 15, 2005, Ethiopia held its first open multiparty elections. The international community praised the people of Ethiopia for an astounding 90 percent voter participation rate, an encouraging beginning to a new political process. The Ethiopian people deserve a democratic process in which opposition parties can organize and participate, and journalists can publish freely, without fear of arrest or retribution. Unfortunately, as it turned out, the 2005 election was not the turning point many had hoped for.

Early polls suggested the opposition Coalition for Unity and Democracy Party would make gains in the Ethiopian Parliament that could threaten the control of Prime Minister Meles' ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front. These reports were followed by credible allegations of manipulation of the vote-counting process. When the government finally announced results that assured its continued hold on power, thousands of people took to the streets in protest. The police arrested over 30,000 people and some 193 people were killed. Although most of the protesters were released soon after their arrest, 70 opposition leaders and journalists remained in prison.

Following these events, I wrote to Ethiopia's Ambassador Kassahun Ayele and officials at the State Department to express my concern with the imprisonment of the Ethiopian politicians. Human rights organizations and other international figures condemned the detentions and urged Prime Minister Meles to release them. These efforts were to no avail.

Some detainees remained in jail for over 2 years before being brought to trial in a manner that was incompatible with international standards of justice. Last month, they were convicted of such vague charges as "outrage against the constitution" and "inciting armed opposition." They were

stripped of their rights to vote and to run for public office. Several were sentenced to life in prison. Nothing was done to prosecute the police officers who fired on the protesters. The situation had gone from bad to worse.

Then suddenly, less than 2 weeks ago, the Ethiopian Government announced the pardon and release of 38 opposition leaders. I am pleased that Prime Minister Meles heeded the pleas of the Ethiopian people and the international community and released these prisoners. The fact is, none of them should have been arrested or tried in the first place. Their release was long overdue and is welcome.

I hope the government acts expeditiously to release the remaining political detainees, and bring to justice police officers who used excessive force. I also hope the negotiations that resulted in the prisoners' release will lead to further discussions between the government and the leaders of the opposition, to ensure that their political rights are fully restored and that future elections are not similarly marred.

While this news is positive, it comes at a time when journalists and representatives of humanitarian organizations report human rights abuses of civilians, including torture, rape and extrajudicial killings, by Ethiopian security forces, including those trained and equipped by the U.S., in the Ogaden region.

Congressman DONALD PAYNE, chairman of the Subcommittee on Africa and Global Health, and a vocal defender of human rights and democracy in Ethiopia, inserted into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD a June 18, 2007, New York Times article that described these abuses.

This situation is also addressed in the Senate version of the fiscal year 2008 State, Foreign Operations Appropriations bill and report, which were reported by the Appropriations Committee on July 10. The Appropriations Committee seeks assurance from the State Department that military assistance for Ethiopia is being adequately monitored and is not being used against civilians by units of Ethiopia's security forces. We need to know that the State Department is investigating these reports. We also want to see effective measures by the Ethiopian Government to bring to justice anyone responsible for such abuses.

Unfortunately, it appears that the Bush administration has made little effort to monitor military aid to Ethiopia. It is no excuse that the Ethiopian military has impeded access to the Ogaden, as it has done. In fact, this should give rise to a sense of urgency. If we cannot properly investigate these reports, and if the Leahy law which prohibits U.S. assistance to units of foreign security forces that violate human rights is not being applied because the U.S. Embassy cannot determine the facts, then we should not be supporting these forces.

As if the allegations of human rights violations were not enough, the New York Times reported on July 22 that the Ethiopian military is blocking food aid to the Ogaden region. The article also claimed that the military is "siphoning off millions" of dollars intended for food aid and a UN polio eradication program. A subsequent article on July 26 indicated that the World Food Program and the Ethiopian Government have reached agreement, after weeks of discussions, on a process for getting food aid through the military blockade to civilians in the Ogaden region. But the same article also reported that regional Ethiopian officials have expelled the Red Cross.

During the Cold War we supported some of the world's most brutal, corrupt dictators because they were anti-Communist. Their people, and our reputation, suffered as a result. Now the White House seems to support just about anyone who says they are against terrorism, no matter how undemocratic or corrupt. It is short sighted, it tarnishes our image, and it will cost us dearly in the long term.

Prime Minister Meles has been an ally against Islamic extremism in the Horn of Africa, for which we are grateful. But there are serious concerns with Ethiopia's U.S.-supported military invasion of Somalia. It has led to some of the same problems associated with the Bush administration's misguided decision to invade Iraq without a plan for leaving the country more stable and secure than before the overthrow of Saddam. Iraq's partition now seems only a matter of time, and it is hard to be optimistic that Somalia a year from now will be any more secure, or any less of a threat to regional stability, than before the influx of Ethiopian troops.

Ethiopia is also a poor country that has faced one natural or man-made disaster after another, and the U.S. has responded with hundreds of millions of dollars in humanitarian and other assistance. We have a long history of supporting Ethiopia and its people, and we want to continue that support. But our support to the government is not unconditional. We will not ignore the unlawful imprisonment of political opponents or the mistreatment of journalists. We will not ignore reports of abuses of civilians by Ethiopian security forces

WIRED FOR HEALTH CARE QUALITY ACT

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I want to take a few minutes to explain the action I am taking related to S. 1693, the Wired for Health Care Quality Act. Today, with great reluctance, I have asked Republican Leader McCONNELL to consult with us prior to any action regarding the consideration of this bill, which the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee reported on August 1, 2007.

The Wired for Health Care Quality Act would encourage the development

of interoperable standards for health information technology, IT, offer incentives for providers to acquire qualified health IT systems to improve the quality and efficiency of health care, and facilitate the secure exchange of electronic health information. The bill also includes provisions to require all federal agencies to comply with standards and specifications adopted by the Federal Government for purposes determined appropriate by the Secretary of Health and Human Services, HHS, and to ensure quality measurement and reporting of provider performance under the Public Health Service Act.

I fully support fostering the adoption of health information technology to assist providers in making quality improvements in our health care system. In 2005, Senator BAUCUS and I introduced the Medicare Value Purchasing Act, S. 1356, in conjunction with Senators ENZI and KENNEDY's legislation known as the Better Healthcare Through Information Technology Act, S. 1355. Although the Medicare Value Purchasing Act did not pass in its entirety, provisions based on our bill have been enacted in other legislation.

Medicare is the single largest purchaser of health care in the Nation, so adopting quality payments in Medicare influences the level of quality in all of health care. We have seen time and time again how when Medicare leads, the other public and private purchasers follow. Medicare can drive quality improvement through payment incentives. The adoption of information technology is also desirable, both to facilitate the reporting of quality measures and to increase the efficiency and quality of our health care system. These two concepts should work together.

A number of legislative initiatives have been enacted in Medicare in recent years to promote the development and reporting of quality measures. The Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement, and Modernization Act of 2003, MMA, included provisions that required the reporting of quality measures for inpatient hospitals. The Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 expanded the reporting of quality measures for inpatient hospital services and extended quality measures to home health settings.

Last year, the Tax Relief and Health Care Act of 2006, TRHCA, extended quality measure reporting to hospital outpatient services and ambulatory service centers. TRHCA also authorized the 2007 Physician Quality Reporting Initiative, PQRI, a voluntary quality reporting system in Medicare for physicians and other eligible health care professionals. Beginning July 1, 2007, the new PQRI program provides Medicare incentive payments for the successful reporting of quality measures that have been adopted or endorsed by a consensus organization. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, CMS, has worked diligently with the