

of duty and responsibility to our Nation's heroes who have sacrificed so much for our very right to stand in this body and debate this matter. There is no good reason or rationale for a hold to be placed on this legislation.

I call on my colleague to remove this hold and ask my colleague to remember, as Veterans Day approaches, that those who have served this country deserve better. They have earned it. It is my obligation and his obligation to support our veterans and to always remember the sacrifice they have made.

Senator COBURN, let the Senate proceed with recognizing and providing for our Nation's veterans by removing your hold on S. 1963.

Again, I thank Chairman AKAKA for his unwavering support and advocacy for our veterans.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

TRAGEDY AT FORT HOOD, TEXAS

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I come to the floor today, as so many of my colleagues have, to reflect on the extraordinary tragedy that took place at Fort Hood, TX, yesterday. It is almost inconceivable such an event could take place.

As we sort through the motives and the rationale, which may take weeks, I think we, obviously, have to extend our deepest, sincerest condolences to the families of these men and women. They were there because they wanted to serve their country. They were there because they were willing to risk their lives in service to this Nation.

Tragically and inexplicably, it happened on a post in the United States not in a faraway land. I think this is a moment where we all have to stop, not only to extend our warmest condolences to the families, but also to reflect on the service and sacrifice of all the troops. Their continued willingness to serve and expose themselves to risk, to leave their families behind—all of this creates the pressure, the tension, the burden of soldiering in this moment in our history. We owe them more than we can repay them.

At this moment, I express my deepest condolences to the families and also to those soldiers who came to the aid of their comrades, who exposed themselves in a dangerous manner to try to get people to safety, to try to provide first aid to the wounded. They continue to be our heroes, and they always will be.

Mr. President, I would now like to speak on the military construction bill before us. I want to commend, obviously, my colleagues, Senator JOHNSON and Senator HUTCHISON, for their great work. I had the privilege for a short

time to serve as the acting chairman of the subcommittee and worked very closely with both Senator JOHNSON, our chairman, and Senator HUTCHISON, the ranking member. They are both very committed and dedicated colleagues, and they have done a remarkable job.

This bill provides \$134 billion for military construction, military family housing, and veterans affairs programs, an increase of approximately \$429 million over the President's request.

This bill provides a total of \$109 billion for the VA and increases funding for medical care by \$4.2 billion over last year's funding.

For the first time, the bill includes advance appropriations for the VA's medical programs to ensure a stable and uninterrupted funding stream.

This bill also provides funding to combat homelessness among veterans. This is a priority of both Secretary Gates and Secretary Shinseki, and also Admiral Mullen, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. This bill includes \$3.2 billion for health care, support services, and housing assistance for homeless veterans.

I hope, again, the Senate will act before Veterans Day to pass this measure. I think it would be a fitting tribute to our veterans, whom we honor in words, and I think we have the chance, early next week, to honor them in deeds.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that my following remarks be printed elsewhere in Morning Business.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

(The remarks of Mr. REED are printed in today's RECORD under "Morning Business.")

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

TRIBUTE TO LIEUTENANT GENERAL THOMAS F. METZ

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I have been very fortunate in my life. One of the great opportunities I received from Senator John O. Pastore of Rhode Island was the opportunity to attend

West Point. At West Point, it was not just a great education, it was not just an opportunity to serve the Nation. The most important opportunity I had was to meet an extraordinary group of my colleagues and classmates who have served this Nation with great distinction now for over 30 years.

Recently, some of my colleagues who have reached general officer ranks have retired: GEN Bill Dailey, who was one of the chiefs of our special operations forces, someone whose heroism and courage would be well renowned if it could be revealed, but because of his special operations missions, much of what he has done will be classified for many years; GEN Mike Maples, who was the head of the Defense Intelligence Agency—two valued friends and classmates who have retired.

In a few days, another of my classmates will join that distinguished roster: LTG Tom Metz. Tom Metz is someone who personifies the values of duty, honor, and country, and who has spent his entire life in service to the Nation.

He joined the Army as an enlisted man in 1966. He went to the Army's West Point preparatory school, and then he joined the class of 1971 in the summer of 1967. Even then, back in the late 1960s, it was quite obvious that Tom Metz was going to be a leader in our Army, that he was going to command great responsibilities. It was a function of his skill but, most importantly, it was a function of his character, his commitment to those he led and to the Nation he chose to serve.

Tom Metz's career has been an extraordinary one. He started as a lieutenant in the 1st Battalion of the 509th Parachute Infantry Regiment in Germany in the 1970s. He rose through the ranks to hold command at every level: platoon, company, battalion.

He concluded his command responsibilities in Iraq as the commander of Multi-National Corps-Iraq during Operation Iraqi Freedom. There he led our forces from January 2004 to February 2005. In a difficult moment, he provided the leadership and the example that our forces needed.

His previous assignments included being the assistant division commander of the 4th Infantry Division, where he was able to begin the technological improvement of our Army by introducing new digital technology for our armored forces. He also served in several staff positions of great responsibility.

Presently, he is the head of the Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Organization. This is the weapon—the IED—of choice of our opponents, and the Department of Defense chose one of the most capable and most caring individuals to lead our effort to defeat these devices.

Tom will conclude a distinguished career. He was bolstered, supported, encouraged, and sustained throughout his career by his wife Pam and his family. They, too, served and they, too, deserve our great commendation and respect.

I am extraordinarily proud of his service as a classmate, as a friend, as someone who admires his character, his courage, and his unstinting commitment to the soldiers he led and the Nation he served. I thank him for his great service.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Pennsylvania is recognized.

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

AFGHANISTAN

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I rise today to talk about the aftermath of the elections debacle in Afghanistan.

President Hamid Karzai's first term was characterized by a cloud of corruption and mismanagement. In his speech on Tuesday, President Karzai promised to battle corruption and to build a government that includes elements of his political opposition. Our President, President Obama, said that Mr. Karzai's performance should be measured not in words but deeds. I believe this to be true, and I wish to offer some thoughts on how President Karzai can rebuild the confidence of the Afghan people as well as the international community.

I am afraid the time window for this new government will be very short, so President Karzai needs to move quickly and with resolve. We might ask, what are the markers by which we should measure the progress of this new Afghan Government? I believe there are at least five areas to review.

First: President Karzai intends to build a better legislative framework to combat corruption. This is good. But he has also said that corruption cannot be solved by replacing high-ranking officials. I could not disagree more with that assessment. With a host of government officials accused of corruption, we will not see a significant break with the past. A large part of battling corruption is removing the perception of corruption. Keeping these officials in place will only serve to fuel a commonly held perception that Mr. Karzai refuses to resolutely deal with this issue of corruption.

I echo President Obama's call for strengthening the country's anticorruption commission. The establishment of such a body is long overdue and could play a key role in rebuilding Afghanistan's trust in the legitimacy of the Karzai government. The CIA should not—should not—be cooperating with Wali Karzai. If we are serious about corruption, we should also be judged by our deeds and not our words.

There are ministries in Afghanistan that are in need of serious reform. The Interior Ministry, which oversees the police, must confront the corruption practiced by police officers on a daily basis. The Agriculture, Energy, and Private Development Ministries also require substantial reforms.

A second area to examine: President Karzai should move quickly to publicly distance himself from some of the more unsavory characters from his election campaign.

GEN Abdul Rashid Dostum, the Uzbek warlord, has been accused of terrible human rights violations for his role in detaining thousands of Taliban fighters who were suffocated in shipping containers. Mr. Karzai's Vice Presidential partner, Mr. Fahim, has been accused of drug trafficking.

I fully acknowledge and I think everyone in this body fully acknowledges that President Karzai has a difficult job of balancing a wide variety of Afghan power centers and ethnic groups. We know that. But building a foundation for his country on such dubious grounds not only calls into question his judgment but seriously endangers the prospects for sustainable reform.

Third: Karzai should keep in place those who have competently fulfilled their responsibilities.

Most noteworthy, perhaps, is the Governor of Helmand Province, Governor Mangal, who continues to struggle on the front lines against the Taliban. I had the opportunity this past August to meet Governor Mangal and to spend some time with him. He is very brave, and he is very competent. I think President Karzai should understand that the American people expect Governors to be strengthened and not undermined. Mr. Karzai should empower provincial Governors and local leaders who have proven their ability to lead. At the national level, the Health Minister has also done a commendable job, and the Education Ministry has made some important strides.

We cannot tell Karzai whom to retain or dismiss in his new government, but these personnel decisions send a very strong signal to the Afghan people and the international community of where he intends to lead the country in the short term.

Fourth: President Karzai needs to take steps to improve the election process in Afghanistan.

Systemic and widespread fraud marred the 2009 election. President Karzai should call for an inquiry into the 2009 electoral process led by experts from Afghanistan and the international community. Parliamentary elections are scheduled for next year. Without a serious investigation and an effort to address the shortcomings of the electoral system, the elections in 2010 and in the future are at risk. Without clean electoral processes in place, the Afghan people will continue to question the legitimacy of their elected leaders.

Fifth and finally: The viability and legitimacy of this new Karzai govern-

ment will be determined in large part by whom he decides to incorporate from the opposition.

While his main opponent, Abdullah, has said he will not join a unity government, there are competent people from his team who can play a constructive role in Afghanistan.

We want and need President Karzai as a reliable partner. I hope his reelection will provide the opportunity for a fresh start in Afghanistan, a start that is characterized by a commitment to good governance, political inclusion, and a realization that Afghanistan's future must be based upon the rule of law.

When I saw President Karzai in August just after the election, I implored him to confront these pressing issues and explained that the patience of the American people was not infinite—in fact, it grows shorter by the day.

The next few weeks will be pivotal. President Karzai can do so much to rebuild the confidence of the international community and the Afghan people in this short period of time. As President Obama determines our troop commitment to the Afghan theater, it must be done with a confidence in Afghanistan's decisionmakers—a confidence that frequently does not often exist today.

President Karzai cannot let his golden hour pass. It is too important to the future of Afghanistan. It is too important to the Afghan people. Finally and most critically, it is too important for the American families who have lost loved ones in Afghanistan and have relatives currently serving in Afghanistan. The sacrifice made by U.S. troops and civilians working to bring stability and a democratic future to the country cannot be overstated or undervalued. This should be the starting point for any discussion with President Karzai.

I believe he has a solemn obligation to get this right, just as we have an obligation here in the Congress to get our strategy in Afghanistan right. There won't be just one way to do that. We will get it right only by vigorous debate, only by an honest dialog of the challenges we face.

But one of the most significant challenges, in addition to the obvious security challenge as well as the developmental challenges, is this central concern we have about governance. Governance in Afghanistan starts with President Karzai. He has an opportunity to demonstrate he is committed to these reforms on corruption, on the better delivery of services to his people, but he has not done very well in a lot of those measures in the recent past. He has to prove himself first and foremost to his own people that he is serious about these reforms, but I think he also has an obligation to our government and to the international community to demonstrate that he wants to get this right.

Mr. President, I yield the floor and note the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.