

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2010

SPEECH OF

HON. SHEILA JACKSON LEE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 27, 2010

Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas. Madam Speaker, I rise in opposition to H.R. 4899, the "Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2010." I oppose the Senate amendments because they will deny job programs to Americans, while continuing to fund a war that has gone far too long.

I want to thank Chairman OBEY for his timely leadership on this legislation. Clearly, opposing a bill that you are charged with bringing to the floor is not easy. However, this is an important moment to decide the direction that our military involvement and national economy are headed. Without some of the programs cut by the Senate, and with the knowledge revealed by the leaked documents, the sum of this bill is no longer palatable.

As originally conceived, H.R. 4899 would have provided funding for the needs of the American people, from national security, housing, employment, health, to education. I fully support these efforts and want to stress that we must continue to provide policies and funding that ensure that the United States remains a global leader in science and technology, including space exploration, which not only results in knowledge-building, but also in hundreds of thousands of jobs throughout the Nation.

The legislation would provide resources to support over 350,000 jobs for youth ages 16 to 21 through summer employment programs. This age group has some of the highest unemployment levels, 25 percent for those aged 16 to 24. This funding will allow local Workforce Investment Boards to expand successful summer jobs programs that were funded in the Recovery Act.

The legislation would also fully fund the settlement of both the Cobell and Pigford class action lawsuits. The Cobell settlement concerns the government's management and accounting for over 300,000 American Indians, trust accounts, and the Pigford settlement ends a decades-old discrimination lawsuit brought by black farmers against USDA.

Before it was amended, this supplemental appropriation would have provided over \$24 billion to keep teachers, firefighters and law enforcement personnel on the job while states continue to recover from the recession; over \$13 billion for Vietnam veterans and survivors exposed to Agent Orange; \$5.7 billion for PELL; \$2.8 billion for Haiti; \$677 million for border security; \$275 million for the Gulf Coast oil spill including unemployment benefits program and unemployment assistance related to the oil spill and an oil spill relief employment program that are underway for the self-employed businessmen and women who were greatly impacted by the Gulf Coast oil spill.

This bill would also provide \$10 billion for an Education Jobs Fund to provide additional emergency support to local school districts to prevent impending layoffs. It is estimated that this fund will help keep 140,000 school employees on the job next year.

Yet, despite these programs, the main purpose of this bill is to extend funding for our military—funds to pay for the war in Afghanistan. It is this that I object to. Although the situation in Afghanistan is far from perfect, the return on our investment has diminished to a point where it no longer makes sense to maintain a large-scale deployment. Additionally, as the human and financial costs continue to rise, the war in Afghanistan is becoming increasingly unpalatable to the citizens of the United States. More than 1,000 U.S. soldiers have been killed in Afghanistan since October 2001, and half of all deaths have occurred since the beginning of 2009. Roadside bombings are on the rise, causing double the number of fatalities in 2009 that they did in 2008. And 2010 is on track to be even worse by that measure. Today we learned that one of two American servicemen who disappeared last week in a dangerous area south of the Afghan capital has been confirmed dead. The war in Afghanistan should end as safely and quickly as possible, and our troops should be brought home with honor and a national day of celebration. I strongly believe that this can and must be done by the end of the year.

This stance is borne from my deeply held belief that we must commend our military for their exemplary performance and success in Afghanistan. As lawmakers continue to debate U.S. policy in Afghanistan, our heroic young men and women continue to willingly sacrifice life and limb on the battlefield. Our troops in Afghanistan did everything we asked them to do. We sent them overseas to destroy the roots of terror and protect our homeland; they are now caught in the midst of an insurgent civil war and continuing political upheaval.

With the change in military leadership to General Petraeus, one year before the target drawdown date of July 2011, America faces a critical juncture in our involvement in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Recently, I returned from a 5-day trip to Afghanistan where I met with our outstanding men and women serving in the region. Although I found our troops and civilians to be of the highest caliber, I left Afghanistan with the impression the reasons for keeping them in a dangerous theatre have diminished. Today, we are at risk of forgetting the impetus for going to war. This is a dangerous mistake. Extending our involvement beyond the initial mandate is an unnecessary risk that makes the United States vulnerable.

Throughout the discussion of the Administration's proposed surge, I expressed my concern for the cost of sending additional troops, as well as the effect that a larger presence in Afghanistan will have on troop morale. The White House estimates that it will cost \$1 million per year for each additional soldier deployed, and I believe that \$30 billion would be better spent on developing new jobs and fixing

our broken healthcare system. Many leaders in our armed forces, including Secretary Gates, have said that it is optimal for troops to have two years between overseas deployments; yet, today, our troops have only a year at home between deployments. Expanding the number of U.S. forces in Afghanistan by 30,000 will negatively impact troop morale and will bring us further away from the conditions necessary to maintain a strong, all-volunteer military.

I very strongly believe that our Nation has a moral obligation to ensure that our veterans are treated with the respect and dignity that they deserve. One reason that we are the greatest Nation in the world is because of the brave young men and women fighting for us in Iraq and Afghanistan. They deserve honor, they deserve dignity, and they deserve to know that a grateful Nation cares about them. Whether or not my colleagues agree that the time has come to withdraw our American forces from Afghanistan, I believe that all of us in Congress should be of one accord that our troops deserve our sincere thanks and congratulations.

It is because I respect our troops that I am voting to bring them home from a war that has strayed far beyond its original mandate. The United States will not and should not permanently prop up the Afghan government and military. To date, almost \$27 billion—more than half of all reconstruction dollars—has been apportioned to build the Afghan National Security Forces.

U.S. military involvement in Afghanistan will come to an end and, when U.S. forces leave, the responsibility for securing their nation will fall to the people and government of Afghanistan. Governance is more than winning elections, it is about upholding human rights, especially the rights of women; it requires fighting corruption. Governance requires fighting corruption. Governance requires providing for the freedom to worship. Governance requires establishing schools that provide education from early childhood through higher education.

Yet, Afghanistan has largely failed to institute the internal reforms necessary to justify America's continued involvement. The recent elections did not reflect the will of the people, and the government has consistently failed to gain the trust of the people of Afghanistan. The troubling reports about the elections that were held on August 20, 2009 were the first in a series of very worrisome developments. The electoral process is at the heart of democracy and the disdain for that process that was displayed in the Afghanistan elections gives me great pause. The Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction recently released his quarterly report which detailed our Nation's efforts to work with contractors and the Afghanistan government to prevent fraud and enhance transparency. This is the 8th report by the Special Inspector General but, as a recent series in the Washington Post showed, we are unable to stem the flow of corruption and waste within Afghanistan,

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Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.

despite our efforts at reforming our own contracting procedures. This money likely comes from the opium trade and U.S. assistance and, the Washington Post estimates, totals over one billion dollars each year.

The task of establishing legitimate governing practices remains formidable. A November 17, 2009 report from Transparency International listed Afghanistan as the second most corrupt country in the world, continuing its second straight year of declining in the corruption index. Such news is disparaging and provides an important dynamic to how we consider our strategy with regards to Afghanistan going forward. In January, a UN survey found that an overwhelming 59 percent of Afghans view public dishonesty as a bigger concern than insecurity, 54 percent and unemployment, 52 percent. This is telling for a country with widespread violence and an unemployment rate of 40 percent.

As Co-Chair of the Congressional U.S.-Afghanistan Caucus, I have called for policies that allow the United States to provide benefits to the people of Afghanistan. Our effort must enhance our efforts at building both hard and soft infrastructure in Afghanistan. Change in Afghanistan is going to come through schools and roads, through health care and economic opportunity, and through increased trade and exchange. The Afghan people need our help to achieve these objectives, but I am not convinced that our military is the solution. If the Government of Afghanistan can demonstrate a responsible and non-corrupt commitment to its people, I believe that America should respond with appropriate and targeted foreign assistance.

I am also concerned that the United States is shouldering too much of the burden in Afghanistan. Although the terror attacks on American soil prompted NATO to respond with collective military action, no nation is immune from the threat of terrorism. Although the troops and resources provided by our allies have been invaluable to date, especially in regarding development for the people of Afghanistan, questions must be raised about how long other nations will remain involved in Afghanistan. France and Germany, for example have already questioned whether or not to send additional troops. NATO resources must continue to focus on improving the livelihoods of the Afghan people, but if the support of these governments waiver, American troops and Afghan citizens will suffer the consequences.

I agree with our President that a stable Afghanistan is in the best interest of the international community and I was pleased to see President Obama's outreach to our allies for additional troops. Currently, 41 NATO and other allied countries contribute nearly 36,000 troops. That number is expected to increase by nearly 6,000 with at least 5,000 additional troops coming from NATO member countries. Multilateralism is vital to ensuring that our operations in Afghanistan succeed.

Madam Speaker, today, we face difficult realities on the ground. The Taliban attacks our forces whenever and wherever they can. Agents of the Taliban seek to turn the people of Afghanistan against us as we attempt to provide them with help in every way we can. This situation is unsustainable. Afghanistan's history has earned it the nickname, "The Graveyard of Empires," and I believe that we should not take this grim history lightly. By in-

cluding a timetable for our operations in Afghanistan, we focus our mission and place it in a long-term context. But there is no need to ignore the successes and heroic work of the Armed forces and the civilian humanitarian workers. We can declare victory having achieved a stable government in Afghanistan and bring our troops home with honor.

Although development to improve the lives of the Afghan people is important, defeating al-Qaeda, and the threat they pose to America and our allies is the most important objective of our operations. To that end, I believe that Pakistan, not Afghanistan, is now the key to success and stability in the region. Over the past 8 years, Coalition Forces have successfully pushed most of al-Qaeda out of Afghanistan and into Pakistan. This has not only put them outside the mandate of our forces, but has also forced Pakistan to address an enlarged terrorist threat.

During his State of the Union Address, President Obama spoke of the importance of Pakistan when he noted "America will remain a strong supporter of Pakistan's security and prosperity long after the guns have fallen silent, so that the great potential of its people can be unleashed." As the Co-Chair of the Congressional Pakistan Caucus, I know, first hand, of the great potential of the Pakistani people, and I strongly believe that the recently approved assistance package to Pakistan will work to this end. U.S. foreign assistance to Pakistan will improve Pakistan's capacity to address terrorist networks within its own borders, but I worry that a troop increase will cause even more refugees and insurgents to cross into Pakistan.

Ultimately, we in Congress must decide what is in the best interest of the American people. Fighting al-Qaeda was in the best interest of the American people in 2001, as it continues to be today. Yet, we are now fighting an insurgency—not al-Qaeda—in Afghanistan. This should not be their mission, and we must bring our troops home.

MAKING EMERGENCY SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS FOR DISASTER RELIEF AND SUMMER JOBS FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING SEPTEMBER 30, 2010 AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Madam Speaker, as you know, the Senate has proposed to strike out a portion of the Act that is vital to supporting the career development of our nation's youth. My amendment would reinstate the section of the bill pertaining to "Employment and Training Administration", which appropriates \$600 million dollars in grants to states to support summer employment programs for youth.

The recent recession has affected various sectors, and unemployment has been borne by many sectors of the economy, particularly in the housing and banking sectors. The suffering that comes with a major economic downturn has been felt not only by the adult population, but by our youth as well, and they have been hindered in their efforts to acquire summer employment as I speak. Statistics also demonstrate that youth minority groups have been more affected than other groups of young individuals. Data assembled by the Bureau of Labor Statistics indicates that in July 2009, 51.4 percent of young persons between the ages of 16 and 24 were involved in some form of summer employment. This was the lowest recorded rate since 1964. The youth unemployment rate, at 18.5 percent, was also a record low since the onset of the Bureau's

statistical studies almost forty years ago. In comparison to a 4 percent rise in unemployment for white youth, 7 percent more African Americans and 10 percent more Hispanics became unemployed between 2006 and 2009. These numbers are troubling, and indicate a need for intervention on our part.

It is important that in our efforts to aid in the economic recovery effort, we do not forget our young Americans. Their career development is crucial to ensuring that whatever economic strides we make today will be sustainable tomorrow. As such, we must ensure that we do not neglect the hardships that have been inflicted upon them as a result of the economic downturn. These funds will promote the intellectual development of our youth, which, in turn, will promote a healthy and innovative economy. Studies have also shown that such an initiative could work to decrease the likelihood of criminal activity by young individuals, who are less likely to engage in such activity when they are involved in productive use of their time.

This Amendment will provide an indispensable source of support for our States to help them develop our youth. For these reasons, I urge my colleagues to support my Amendment on summer youth jobs.

I thank you for consideration of H.R. 4899 for the Fiscal Year 2010 Emergency Supplemental Appropriations bill. Finally, no family, no settlement money for the Black farmers, no monies to save the jobs of teachers, police and fire personnel. This bill is lacking in helping more of the American People.

HONORING THE CAREER OF
KENNETH CANTER, D.P.M.

HON. BETTY McCOLLUM

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 28, 2010

Ms. McCOLLUM. Madam Speaker, today I rise to honor the service of Kenneth Canter, Doctor of Podiatric Medicine, who recently retired after 32 years serving our veterans at the Minneapolis VA Medical Center.

Dr. Canter received his undergraduate degree from the University of Maryland in College Park, Maryland and his medical degree from the Pennsylvania College of Podiatric Medicine in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 1972. He began his career with the Department of Veterans Affairs in Minneapolis in 1977 as one of the first 35 podiatrists hired to treat our veterans. For 32 years, he worked at the Minneapolis VA Medical Center, retiring as Chief of Podiatry in June 2010.

Dr. Canter cared for Minnesota veterans with compassion and respect, always taking additional care to render the finest and most effective treatments. Aside from treating his patients, he authored scientific articles and mentored podiatrists who came to the VA for post-graduate training. Dr. Canter's dedication to outstanding medical care and sincere concern for our nation's veterans are the qualities of a truly great VA doctor, and I am proud that he is a resident of my Congressional District.

Madam Speaker, please join me in honoring Dr. Kenneth Canter for his distinguished 32 years of service to Minnesota veterans.