

I thank my colleagues for joining me in this bipartisan effort: Senators COLLINS, AKAKA, ROCKEFELLER, MIKULSKI, BINGAMAN, JOHNSON, KAUFMAN, KERRY, LANDRIEU, STABENOW, and WARNER. This is the companion bill to H.R. 5200, introduced by my colleague from Maryland, CHRIS VAN HOLLEN, and it has been endorsed by the National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association, NARFE, the National Federation of Federal Employees, NFFE, the American Federation of Government Employees, AFGE, and the National Treasury Employees Union, NTEU. I urge my colleagues to support this important legislation and to pass it without delay, so that children of Federal employees can have the same coverage option as children of other employees in the private sector.

AFGHANISTAN

Mr. KAUFMAN. Mr. President, I rise today to talk about progress and challenges in Afghanistan in light of President Karzai's visit to Washington this week. Last month, I returned from my third trip to Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iraq as part of a codel with Senators HAGAN and REED. What stood out most from our trip was the quality, caliber, and courage of U.S. troops and civilians, who risk their lives every day to defend our national security interests in these two critical regions. I was humbled by the opportunity to thank them for their sacrifice and service and impressed by the progress which has been made.

At the same time, I was taken aback by the myriad of challenges that lie ahead, especially in Afghanistan. Chief among them is walking the tightrope required to balance our complex relationship with President Karzai. Partnership with President Karzai is required for success. He needs to work with the United States in both word and deed to promote economic development, build the Afghan security forces, combat extremists, tackle the drug trade, eliminate corruption, and improve systems of governance.

In Afghanistan, we have begun to successfully implement the strategy outlined by President Obama in December, as evidenced by ongoing operations against the Taliban, greater emphasis on subnational governance, and a renewed training and partnering effort with the Afghan Army and police. While much attention has been paid to the deployment of an additional 30,000 U.S. troops, it is clear that success in counterinsurgency requires far more than a large military footprint, as there is no purely military solution to this problem.

In order to meet our goals of "shape, clear, hold, build, transfer," we must also have a strong and capable civilian presence to establish good governance; increase training of Afghan national security forces; and further improve cooperation with Pakistan, especially when it comes to securing the border

and targeting the Afghan Taliban. Without these other elements of our broader counterinsurgency strategy, military success will not be sustained and authority cannot be transferred to the Afghans. And make no mistake—the transfer of power is our ultimate goal, beginning with the President's announced conditions-based drawdown starting in July 2011.

While in Afghanistan in April, we met with President Karzai and gave suggestions of steps we thought he could take to lay the groundwork for a successful visit to Washington. We raised the issue of corruption, which, if left unaddressed, threatens to undermine nearly all other areas of progress. After all, counterinsurgency is not a struggle between the United States and the insurgents. It is a battle for legitimacy between the Afghan Government and the Taliban, and perceptions of corruption only further distance the Afghan Government from the population.

I am pleased that President Karzai has said many of the right things, starting with commitments made in his November inauguration speech. He has also recently issued a decree giving power to the High Office of Oversight and Anti-Corruption to investigate government corruption cases and has granted greater budgeting and implementation powers to provincial and district officials.

These are good first steps, but progress requires more than decrees and rhetoric. There is far more that must be done because—as I have said before—our best defense in Afghanistan is a strong, efficient, and accountable Afghan Government. In order to defeat an insurgency, there must be capable and transparent governance and not just in Kabul. Effective government must extend to the subnational level, where it can provide essential services and secure the population.

On my trip, I was encouraged to learn of district teams collaborating with trainers and mentors to strengthen systems of local governance, especially in Regional Commands South and East. In these areas, civilian officials are working at the provincial and district levels with their Afghan counterparts—especially those from the so-called "line ministries" of agriculture, education, health, security, and reconstruction and rural development—to provide basic services and improve the lives of Afghan citizens. They are implementing a system to strengthen the country from the bottom up, which will minimize the influence of the Taliban and marginalize its shadow governments. This was especially evident in Marjah, where we just concluded the first jointly planned and implemented U.S.-Afghan, civilian-military operation.

Last week, the Foreign Relations Committee held a hearing on the "Meaning of Marjah" to explore lessons learned as we look toward this summer's Kandahar offensive. While

the clearing phase in Marjah was quick and decisive, we have now entered the "hold and build" stage, which presents a spectrum of new challenges. As BG John Nicholson noted in the hearing, "The challenge here is to connect the people with their government, thereby creating a nexus between the citizens of Marjah and government officials." Thus far, a small group of Afghan civil servants is working with U.S. civilians to provide basic services, but more must be done. A sustained and effective government presence free from the stigma of corruption is an essential prerequisite to success not just in Marjah, but in all counterinsurgency operations.

This was evidenced by a recent community council meeting, or shura, attended by President Karzai and General McChrystal in Marjah. At the shura, members of the local population made it clear to President Karzai that the people surrounding him were contributing to the problem. They told him that corrupt government officials, such as the former chief of police, were creating reasons for the population to support the Taliban. It is my understanding that this event, which was followed by a similar experience in Kandahar, may have given President Karzai pause, as he realized that he must address the root causes of corruption in order to win over the population.

Corruption remains a large hurdle in this effort, but it is not the only one. We must also ensure there are enough civilians to partner with the Afghans. While I am pleased that the Obama administration has made this a priority, tripling the number of deployed civilians over the past year, it must continue to ensure that there are enough civilians outside of Kabul to engage with the population. It is remarkable that 13 U.S. Government agencies are now represented, and the recent civilian uplift has been the biggest since Vietnam. At the same time, 1,000 U.S. civilians with less than 400 outside of Kabul is simply not enough to partner with 100,000 U.S. troops and reach a population of 28 million.

We must also continue to focus on increased training for the Afghan national security forces so they can assume responsibility for securing the population. We are on track to reach at least 134,000 in the Afghan National Army, ANA, by October, and the quality of officers and recruits has risen in recent weeks. This is due in part to recent pay raises and increased effectiveness given intensified partnering with U.S. troops. I am pleased that nearly 90 percent of all units are now partnered, and large military operations—such as Marjah—were truly joint operations.

Unfortunately we have not yet seen the same levels of progress toward building the Afghan National Police, ANP, as we have with the army. In a Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs subcommittee hearing chaired by Senator MCCASKILL last month, we

discussed the range of problems that has hampered the growth and training of the ANP. I was appalled to hear that \$6 billion has been spent to date on training contracts with very little to show for it. I understand the challenges of training a police force which is largely illiterate and suffering from high rates of attrition, but the answer is not to repeat the same mistakes or renew inefficient contracts.

The stakes are simply too high. We cannot afford for this training effort to be ineffective or approach police training as an ad hoc mission. We must demonstrate better oversight of this critical training program and ensure that our efforts result in the establishment of a qualified and committed Afghan police force. Moreover, we must consider building a stronger U.S. Government capacity to oversee future police training missions. As we look toward a future with fewer conventional threats and an increased number of insurgencies, there is no question that this capacity is needed to defend our security interests globally.

President Karzai is under enormous pressure to meet our high expectations and demands. In our recent meeting, we discussed our shared interest in a strong partnership and a productive visit to Washington. I understand that the pressure is growing as we focus on building subnational governance and as our military plans focus squarely on Kandahar, which is the home of the Taliban and an area where Karzai's family and tribe still exercise great influence.

I look forward to seeing President Karzai when he is here, and I hope to hear more about his plans to address corruption, improve governance, and enhance economic development. I hope he understands that the United States shares an enduring commitment to building a strong and sovereign Afghanistan, both in the near term and well into the future, so that our joint efforts now can benefit future generations.

NATIONAL LAB DAY

Mr. KAUFMAN. Mr. President, I rise today, to celebrate National Lab Day. While today is the official National Lab Day kick-off, National Lab Day is much more than just one day. It is an ongoing effort to bring scientists and engineers into the classroom to conduct hands-on experiments with students.

Last November, President Obama launched the "Educate to Innovate" campaign to motivate and inspire students to excel in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, or STEM, education. As part of this effort, President Obama announced the launch of National Lab Day and encouraged Americans to get involved. Created through a partnership between Federal agencies, foundations, professional societies, and other STEM-related organizations, support for Na-

tional Lab Day grew quickly. Currently, projects are scheduled in every State, including over 1,000 schools.

I have spoken many times on the Senate floor about the importance of STEM education. I advocated for the inclusion of increased service opportunities for retired engineers and other STEM professionals in the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act. National Lab Day is an important step towards creating strong, long-term relationships between STEM professionals and educators.

Importantly, National Lab Day projects are teacher-driven. Teachers can register at the National Lab Day Web site and request funding or describe a project they would like to do with a STEM professional. Teachers can have STEM professionals help them assess, update, and repair current lab facilities and equipment, implement hands-on activities, conduct science fairs, mentor students, coordinate field trips, assist with lesson plans, and more.

Once teachers post their requests on the National Lab Day Web site, they will be matched with a list of local volunteers who have registered on the Web site. Volunteers need not only be STEM professionals, as university STEM students and other members of the community can sign up to help as well. Volunteers can browse teacher requests and will be notified of any matches to teacher requests that meet their interests.

A quick look at the projects posted on the Web site reveals intriguing titles such as VEX Robotics, Tech Genographics, Space—the Final Frontier, and Get Ahead—Design a Shed, to name a few. The Office of Science and Technology Policy blog recently highlighted a National Lab Day project that took place at East Side Community High School in Manhattan. With the recent major BP oilspill in the Gulf of Mexico, this particular lab was especially timely to students. A local college professor taught 10th graders how to clean and purify "contaminated" water made of tap water mixed with dirt, flour, salad dressing, and dish soap. This is exactly the type of hands-on experiment that National Lab Day promotes to expose young people to the real-world applications and wonders of STEM.

Support for National Lab Day is extensive. Key partners include: the National Science Teachers Association, American Chemical Society, MacArthur Foundation, Hidary Foundation, the National Institutes of Health, and the National Science Foundation. Additionally, more than 200 educational, scientific, and engineering organizations support National Lab Day, including such groups as the National Education Association and the Association for Women and Science.

National Institutes of Health Director Dr. Francis Collins is participating in National Lab Day by volunteering in a local District of Columbia school and

he has encouraged NIH employees to get involved as well. American Society for Engineering Education President J.P. Mohsen is participating in National Lab Day and is encouraging other ASEE members nationwide to do the same in their local communities. First Lady Michelle Obama highlighted National Lab Day when she spoke to the team finalists at the National Science Bowl.

I have said many times that I believe the long-term vitality of our economy rests with our ability to use STEM to solve the major problems we face. Whether it is energy independence, climate change, life-saving cures for diseases, security challenges, or new solutions for transportation, STEM professionals are the world's problem solvers. Fortunately, young people today want to "make a difference" with their lives, but unfortunately, not enough of them see STEM as the way to do that.

National Lab Day will allow STEM professionals not only to share their unique skills and knowledge with educators and students, but it will also allow them to share the rewards of a career in STEM and the numerous ways that STEM professionals "make a difference." National Lab Day, and the relationships it is fostering, will help inspire the next generation of scientists and engineers. I applaud the volunteers, teachers, associations, and agencies that are participating in National Lab Day—today and in the future.

CRISIS IN THE PHILADELPHIA CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

Mr. SPECTER. Mr. President, in a four-part series titled "Justice: Delayed, Dismissed, Denied," published in December 2009, the Philadelphia Inquirer reported on the failure of the Philadelphia criminal justice system to provide fair and speedy justice. "It is a system that too often fails to punish violent criminals, fails to protect witnesses, fails to catch thousands of fugitives, fails to decide cases on their merits—fails to provide justice."¹ Given that Philadelphia has the highest violent crime rate among the 10 largest cities in the United States, this is an urgent problem which Senator SPECTER has worked hard to address.

In the past 5 months, Senator SPECTER has taken a leadership role by holding three Senate field hearings, bringing together the experts and key players in the criminal justice system to work collaboratively to find solutions to these problems. He has sought and obtained funding for the U.S. Marshals Service's Fugitive Task Force to provide assistance in locating and arresting Philadelphia's fugitives. Finally, he has introduced and supported significant legislation to better protect State witnesses, to fund State witness protection programs, and to fund State fugitive recovery efforts and the entry of State warrants into the national warrant database.