

Those who have so eloquently written and spoken knew the Senator much better than I—Presidents, Senators, world leaders, dignitaries, as well as members of his family and friends in West Virginia.

He will be remembered as an intelligent, compassionate and illustrious figure. A giant.

Many people have recalled his historic milestones, distinguished career and legendary speeches. I first met Senator Byrd when I arrived in the Senate in 2007. I introduced myself and told him about a friend and patient of mine from Wyoming who had told me that Robert Byrd was his favorite senator. Like Senator Byrd, my friend uses a wheelchair. Senator Byrd asked me why my friend liked him so much. I told him it was because of their mutual commitment to the Constitution.

I went on to say that he thought Senator Byrd was “the best thing since sliced bread.” Senator Byrd’s eyes brightened and widened with the reference to sliced bread. He then gave me a complete history of sliced bread in America and the date when the first mechanical bread slicer was used in the United States. As a true man of the people, Senator Byrd also sent a note and a copy of the Constitution to my friend in Wyoming.

When former Wyoming Senator Cliff Hansen died late last year, I shared the news with Senator Byrd. Senator Byrd said, “I liked Cliff Hansen. Cliff Hansen was a friend of mine. Cliff Hansen knew what he stood for.” The same can be said for Senator Byrd.

As a public servant, he had few equals. As a parliamentary expert, he had none. Every day, Senator Byrd showed his enduring dedication to his family, the people of West Virginia, the United States Constitution, and our Nation.

Senator Byrd leaves us with a memory of the man—the memory of his kindness, grace, and passion. He had a depth of institutional understanding and knowledge of the traditions of the U.S. Senate that will never be replaced. While many of us are students of history, Senator Byrd truly lived this Nation’s history. His strength, determination, and unyielding pursuit of knowledge serve as a model for all of us.

To his daughters Mona Byrd Fatemi and Marjorie Byrd Moore, his grandchildren, and family, I extend my family’s sympathy and hope the coming days are filled with love, enduring strength, and God’s grace.

Bobbi and I wish the Byrd family our best and our prayers are with you.

KYRGYZSTAN

Mr. KAUFMAN. Mr. President, in the last few weeks, great turmoil has unfolded in Kyrgyzstan. According to media reports, ethnic riots in the southern cities of Osh and Jalalabad have left up to 2,000 dead—309 confirmed by the Kyrgyz Government—thousands have been injured, and ap-

proximately 400,000 Uzbeks have been displaced.

I am deeply concerned about ethnic clashes and ongoing tension between the Kyrgyz and Uzbeks, especially given reports that international observers have noted they are reminiscent of the tragedies in Bosnia and Rwanda in the 1990s. Today, the situation appears to have stabilized, but we cannot discount the potential for renewed conflict after an apparent lull, which happened in both Bosnia and Rwanda.

We must also not forget that what happens in Kyrgyzstan has implications for U.S. interests throughout central Asia. As the Senate noted in Resolution 566, which passed unanimously on June 25, the events of the past month could spark unrest across the Ferghana Valley, which borders Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan. Kyrgyzstan also plays host to a U.S. air base at Manas International Airport that serves as a critical supply line for NATO and U.S.-led operations in Afghanistan.

For these reasons, I rise today to urge the provisional government and all citizens of Kyrgyzstan to move ahead with the process of reconciliation. I would also like to commend the Obama administration and others in the international community—particularly the United Nations and Russia—who have rendered fiscal and humanitarian aid to the Government of Kyrgyzstan during this difficult time. The international community must call on all parties to refrain from violence, cease persecution of minorities, and explore peaceful routes to conflict resolution.

There is other news out of Kyrgyzstan worth noting—namely, the referendum held on June 27 in support of a constitution that will establish central Asia’s first parliamentary democracy. This referendum was peaceful and inclusive, and I commend the provisional government for organizing this process. The referendum marked a historic opportunity to usher in a new period of democracy and stability in Kyrgyzstan, and the stakes are high. This is why I would like to highlight three areas where I hope there can be additional progress can be made.

Perhaps most importantly, there must be a credible investigation into the recent violence. One of the most important actions to take is to establish an investigative team that is viewed as credible by all sides. This investigation must ensure the perpetrators of violence are held accountable for their actions and initiate a process whereby all citizens, including ethnic Uzbeks, see themselves as sufficiently represented in the country’s national institutions.

The interim government must also ensure a smooth transition to the new Constitution. This means that the Kyrgyz authorities should redouble efforts to prevent the escalation of violence, and observers must monitor the

elections. The first transition of power is critical to the success of this democratic transition because it will set the baseline for all future elections. The people of Kyrgyzstan have shown overwhelmingly that they want democracy, and now the provisional government should do everything in its power to make those aspirations a reality.

Finally, the government must promote freedom of the press. According to Freedom House, in 2010, Kyrgyzstan was ranked 159th of 192 countries. At this critical juncture, the interim government may feel tempted to muzzle criticism to avoid giving fodder to dissidents. But to do so would undermine its credibility far more than any words published in a free press. There is an undeniable connection between a population’s confidence in their political system and the capacity of that system to ensure the free flow of information through an independent media. If the interim government and its successor want to identify the failures of previous governments in Kyrgyzstan, they need look no further than its abysmal record in the area of press freedom. To make the new constitution in Kyrgyzstan a success, the nation needs a truly independent media.

Mr. President, we are at an important turning point in Kyrgyzstan, where there is a glimmer of hope about democracy taking root in the future. At the same time, the potential for renewed unrest, rampant corruption, and curtailed freedoms could easily jeopardize recent progress. It is incumbent on all sides to act responsibly and to ensure there is not a resurgence of violence, so that the new Government of Kyrgyzstan can set an example of successful democracy for the region.

SMALL BUSINESS LENDING

Ms. SNOWE. Mr. President, I rise to speak of an amendment, cosponsored by Senators GRASSLEY, ENZI, ISAKSON, and COLLINS, which has proven small business job creating power.

It should come as no surprise to anyone that it remains difficult for small businesses to access credit. We have all heard the justifiable frustration and outrage expressed by entrepreneurs nationwide in response to the albatross of tight credit which has a chokehold on our economy. And frankly, who could blame them, when just this past April, the Federal Reserve’s Senior Loan Officer Opinion Survey found the percentage of banks easing credit terms for small businesses was just a meager 1.9 percent—after it was an astonishing zero percent in both the past January and October surveys! Is this any way to jumpstart an anemic economy?

As ranking member of the Senate Small Business Committee I, along with Chair LANDRIEU, have vigorously championed measures to ease credit and increase small business lending. Together, we fought to include in the

Recovery Act key provisions to increase the maximum government guarantee on Small Business Administration, SBA, loans to 90 percent and to appropriate \$375 million to reduce fees for SBA 7(a) and 504 borrowers. This program proved to be so popular and viable that its funds were expended first in November 2009, then in February 2010, and again in March 2010, following short term extensions.

But regrettably, these provisions have lapsed, and a program that paid tangible dividends, having been credited with increasing loan volumes by a remarkable 90 percent nationwide and 236 percent in Maine, has to my dismay come to a close. At a time when unemployment hovers at near ten percent and consumer confidence hangs in abeyance, nothing could be more counter-intuitive than to allow this to happen. And the numbers speak for themselves. In June alone, the SBA approved only \$647 million in SBA 7(a) guaranteed loans, a 65.9 percent decrease from the \$1.9 billion in 7(a) loans it approved in May.

No wonder in a July 11 New York Times article, SBA Administrator Karen Mills urged Congress to continue these programs, stating that “we’ve been able to put \$30 billion in the hands of small businesses and now is not the time to pull back” Talk about the proverbial snatching defeat from the jaws of victory!

Our amendment would resuscitate this highly effective program, providing \$485 million to reinstate SBA fee reductions and the elevated guarantee on SBA 7(a) loans through the end of 2010. And we pay for it by using unobligated Recovery Act funds. In fact, according to the Recovery Accountability and Transparency Board, there are approximately \$50 billion in unobligated stimulus funds, and our amendment, which would cost less than 1 percent—.97 percent to be exact—of the overall amount, is paid for by rescinding, on a pro rated basis, from these funds. While we all must make difficult spending decisions, it should be clear that reinstating these vital provisions represents a commonsense approach to providing capital to small businesses across our Nation.

These are actions we can take right here and right now that complement this bill’s SBA related provisions which increase the maximum limits for SBA 7(a) and 504 loans from \$2 million to \$5 million, raise the maximum microloan limit from \$35,000 to \$50,000, and allow for the refinancing of conventional small business loans through the SBA 504 program.

They will begin providing capital immediately to small businesses, and they have strong industry support from the National Association of Development Companies, which represents 504 lenders and the National Association of Government Guaranteed Lenders, which represents 7(a) lenders.

In conclusion, this initiative ought to be a simple way to swiftly provide

assistance to those economic engines that are the lifeblood of our economy—our Nation’s small businesses. It is my hope that this body can accept this amendment quickly, by unanimous consent, so that we can provide our economic catalysts with at least a modicum of capital security, financial stability, and economic certainty.

BOMBINGS IN UGANDA

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, I join President Obama, Secretary Clinton, and people around the world in condemning the horrific bombings in Uganda last Sunday. These attacks killed scores of innocent people and wounded many others who had peacefully gathered to watch the World Cup final.

I was particularly saddened to learn that Nate Henn, an American who worked as a volunteer with Invisible Children to help children affected by war in Uganda’s northern region, was among those murdered in this cowardly act. I have worked closely with members of the Invisible Children team to bring attention to the atrocities committed by the Lord’s Resistance Army, and I know their passion and dedication. I offer my deepest condolences to the Henn family and the whole Invisible Children family, as well as to all the other victims and their families.

The United States has close ties and a strong working partnership with the people and Government of Uganda, and we stand with them in this difficult moment. I strongly support efforts by the U.S. Government to assist Ugandan authorities to investigate these attacks and bring the perpetrators to justice. And given the news of another attempted attack on Tuesday, we should also help the government take enhanced security measures.

At the same time though, we should encourage the government to avoid any actions that could be seen as broadly targeting Somalis or the Muslim community more generally in Uganda. These communities in Uganda have not been known for violent or extremist activity in the past, and it would be counterproductive to alienate them. They should be allies in seeking to identify and apprehend those individuals behind these heinous attacks.

Al Shebaab, the Somali terrorist group whose leaders have links to al-Qaida, has claimed responsibility for this attack. Al Shebaab has been threatening for months to carry out attacks in Kenya, Uganda, and Burundi, and if their claim is true, this would be the first time that they have carried out a major attack outside Somalia’s borders. It would underscore the threat that this terrorist group poses not only to neighboring countries but throughout Africa and potentially even to the United States.

For years, I have drawn attention to the continuing conflict in Somalia and its direct ramifications for our national security. As I mentioned, al

Shebaab’s leadership has links to al-Qaida and has indicated a desire to work with al-Qaida affiliates worldwide, particularly al-Qaida in the Arab Peninsula in Yemen. In addition and perhaps even more disconcerting, al Shebaab has recruited a number of Americans to travel to the region and fight. In October 2008, a Somali-American blew himself up in Somalia as part of a coordinated attack by al Shebaab. The Justice Department has since brought terrorist charges against more than a dozen people for recruiting and raising funds for Americans to fight with al Shebaab.

These developments have not gone unnoticed by our national security leaders, and the Obama administration has rightly put greater focus on Somalia. But our policy toward the country still lacks a strategic, long-term vision, and sufficient resources. The Obama administration is providing some support to the Transitional Federal Government and to the AU peace-keeping force in Mogadishu, but this support has done little to change the fundamental dynamics of the situation. We need to go back to the drawing board and develop a strategy that directly targets the conflicts and conditions that are bolstering al Shebaab and, by extension, al-Qaida. That strategy may entail greater support for the TFG and AMISOM, but we may also need to explore alternative options.

To carry out such a strategy, we need a diplomatic effort equal to the challenges we face in Somalia. We need an increased, strengthened team with the necessary resources, access, and mandate to engage with actors in Somalia and across the wider region. I have called on the President and Secretary of State to appoint a senior envoy to help oversee such a diplomatic effort toward Somalia. Such an envoy could also advance much needed public diplomacy efforts to address the high level of suspicion and resentment with which many Somalis continue to view the United States. And finally, this person could help ensure that we are connecting the dots among all the other countries affected by the Somalia crisis and al Shebaab.

Mr. President, there are no easy or quick solutions to Somalia’s troubles, and attempts by external actors to impose solutions have failed. But as the tragic events in Uganda this week should make clear, the current situation in Somalia is intolerable—for the region and the international community, not to mention the Somali people who continue to suffer one of the world’s worst humanitarian crises. We cannot afford to just continue with our current halfhearted efforts and hope for the best. Working with our regional partners and others in the international community, we need to get serious about a new push for peace and stability in Somalia.