

conveys not steadfastness of purpose, but misapplication of pride.”

I want to repeat that. He said, “A respect for the power of the United States is engendered by our success in engagements in which we take part. A point is reached when tenacity conveys not steadfastness of purpose, but misapplication of pride.”

I think the American people long ago reached the point where they felt that these wars should come to an end and we should start taking care of our own country.

Georgie Ann Geyer, the conservative foreign policy columnist, wrote this a few years ago: “Americans, still strangely complacent about overseas wars being waged by a minority in their name, will inevitably come to a point where they will see they have to have a government that provides services at home or one that seeks empire across the globe.”

Madam Speaker, fiscal conservatives should be the ones most horrified by all this waste and all this spending. I wonder sometimes if there are any conservatives at the Pentagon, any fiscal conservatives at the Pentagon.

I will say once again, these wars became long ago more about money and power than they did about any real threat. It is a shame what we are doing to the young people of this country, both those in the military and those outside the military.

Just this past Sunday, I went to the funeral of another soldier, a young 21-year-old man in Madisonville, Tennessee, who had been killed in Afghanistan. And I can tell you it's time to stop all the killings of all of our young people and let them have a good future in this country once again.

THE WAR IN AFGHANISTAN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Vermont (Mr. WELCH) for 5 minutes.

Mr. WELCH. Madam Speaker, I, first of all, wish to associate myself with the remarks of Mr. DUNCAN, Mr. JONES, and Mr. MCGOVERN, who spoke earlier; and I intend to address the issue of the war in Afghanistan.

This war has got to end. It's got to end because it's making us weaker, not stronger. It's a dead-end strategy that is the result of decisions that were made that do not treat with the respect they are entitled to the willingness of our men and women in uniform to serve. They will do whatever it is we ask them to do.

Our job is to give them a policy that's worthy of the sacrifice that they are always willing to make. This war in Afghanistan has been going on for 10 years. It has morphed into the United States military and the United States taxpayer having the burden of building a nation in Afghanistan. That can't be done. We know it can't be done, but there is an unwillingness to have a reckoning in this Congress and in this country to turn the direction of our na-

tional defense into fighting terrorism in a sensible way, not nation-building in Afghanistan.

So the central issue here is not just the money, which I'll address; it's not just the time that this war has been going on, which I'll address; it's the basic strategy. This nation-building approach, over 100,000 American troops in Afghanistan, over 110,000 contractors, does that make sense when the enemy that we're fighting is decentralized and dispersed? It's not a nation state threat.

And the answer to that, we all know—it's common sense, you don't have to be a military strategist—is no. And the main reason we continue on in Afghanistan is because arguments are made that it will look bad or it will look weak if we leave.

Mr. DUNCAN said something, I think, that makes a lot of sense. When you are persistent in the face of facts that show that what you are doing is wrong, it's time to adjust the strategy. We in this Congress owe it to the men and women in uniform to give them that strategy that's worthy of their willingness to sacrifice.

We went into Afghanistan for a legitimate reason. That reason does not exist today. We went in because that was the launching sight where Osama bin Laden planned the 9/11 attacks. And we had a right, in our national self-defense, to take out the sanctuaries and to pursue Osama bin Laden.

Those sanctuaries have been taken out, and now what we are engaged in is a continuation and a stumbling ahead towards a policy of this nation-building where we have 100,000 troops, 40,000 international troops, 110,000 contractors, where we're throwing money at problems as though these contractors can get something done, and the corruption associated with a lot that contracting is rampant.

□ 1030

There are 286,000 Afghan National Security Forces troops who are poorly trained and leave at a moment's notice. This has come at an enormous expense to this country: \$10 billion a month; \$2.3 billion a week; \$328 million per day; \$13.7 million an hour.

What is happening? Is that where the threat to the country is coming from? The terrorist plots that we can identify that have happened in recent years, the Fort Hood shooting that killed 13 people in November 2009, that was planned in Yemen by Anwar Al Awlaki. The plot to bring down Northwest Airlines Flight 253 on Christmas Day 2009 was planned in Yemen by the same man. The attempt to bomb Times Square in May 2010 was planned and ordered by the Pakistani Taliban. And the October 2010 plot to bomb cargo planes was again planned in Yemen.

So the threat is real. Terrorism is a threat to this country. We have to address it, but we have to have a strategy that works. And having 100,000 of our

troops in one nation when the terrorist threat is dispersed and decentralized throughout other parts of the world doesn't make any sense. It's time for this Congress and this President to call the question, change the strategy which requires us to right-size what our effort is, because that will, A, protect the American people in a better, more effective way; and, B, it will be a sustainable strategy, which has to be a responsibility of the policymakers.

There's been enormous sacrifice by the men and women in uniform. The troops from the State of Vermont have sacrificed and lost more lives in the Iraq and Afghanistan war on a per capita basis than any other State in the Nation. They are entitled to a policy worthy of their sacrifice.

SUFFOCATING REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. HURT) for 5 minutes.

Mr. HURT. Madam Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the people of Virginia's Fifth District, on behalf of the small business owners and farmers across central and southside Virginia who have been directly negatively impacted by the suffocating government regulatory environment.

These good people have been so overburdened by an overreaching government that they are left struggling to make ends meet in these challenging economic times, unable to expand their businesses and discouraged from starting new ones. Over the past 2 months, I have traveled through the Fifth District, making stops from Green County to Danville, from Martinsville to Brunswick County. I heard from constituents about the very real effects that unnecessary government regulations are having on their businesses and their lives.

Just this last week, I visited with a convenience store owner in Campbell County who has five stores and 48 employees. He has the desire and the resources to expand and build two more convenience stores, creating more jobs in the area, but he reports that he is unwilling to do so because of the mandates and taxes that will be imposed on his business as a part of the job-destroying government takeover of health care.

Last week I also visited with an owner of an auto repair shop in Appomattox. He told me that he first started his business back in 1987. Back then, he was able to get his business up and running in one day. One day was all it took for him to obtain all of the required permits and licenses and pay all of the required taxes and fees. After running his shop for a number of years, he then moved on to another job. Then just recently in 2011, he decided he wanted to reopen his shop and found that instead of taking one day to wade through the regulatory redtape, this year it took him 5 months.

If the President and the United States Senate want to know why our economy isn't growing, this is why. These are the real life implications for Fifth District Virginians and all Americans created by the regulatory agenda that has been put in place by this administration and the last Congress over the past 2 years. These added costs jeopardize the success of our small businesses and destroy jobs. The added uncertainty crushes the entrepreneurial spirit and stalls economic growth. And the added expansion of the Federal Government strips away our freedoms and our opportunities.

So when a diner owner in Farmville tells me that Washington is taking the breath away from the American people, this is what she's talking about, an ever-growing government that stands as a barrier between a struggling economy and a growing, vibrant economy that we all desperately want.

So as the House continues to lead the way and works to reduce unnecessary regulations, it is my hope that we will keep in mind the convenience store owners, the auto repair shop owners, and all of the small businesses and farmers who are relying on us to get this right, who are relying on us to support those policies that remove the Federal Government as a roadblock to job creation and return our economic recovery back where it belongs—in the hands of the people.

AFGHANISTAN STILL NEEDS AN EXIT STRATEGY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. GARAMENDI) for 5 minutes.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

On October 7, 2001, the United States officially began Operation Enduring Freedom, and the war in Afghanistan was underway. The last decade of wars has cost thousands of U.S. lives and hundreds of billions of taxpayer dollars.

As a member of the House Armed Services Committee and as a representative of thousands of servicemembers, military families, and veterans, I'm entrusted with weighing the decision on what the profound effect on our Nation's security this war has brought and on the men and women that risk their lives every day to ensure that security. As we mark the 10th anniversary of the longest war in America's history, we believe it's time for Congress to ask some very serious questions about our military engagement in Afghanistan.

Whom are we fighting in Afghanistan? We entered this war because of the threat posed by the international terrorist organization al Qaeda. While al Qaeda expands its operations around the globe, our military is tied up in a ground war against the Taliban, an Afghan rebel group with domestic ambitions. Senior intelligence officials have

estimated fewer than 100 al Qaeda members remain in Afghanistan, yet we plan to have 68,000 U.S. troops there in that country through the next year. If we are to defeat terrorism, we must stick to our original strategic mission, maintaining a laser-like focus on al Qaeda and capitalizing on our technological and intelligence advantages to cut off their financing, intercept their operations, and take out their leaders. The successful operation against Osama bin Laden epitomizes this targeted approach.

Where's our money going? Afghanistan is widely considered to be one of the most corrupt countries in the world, behind only Somalia, and news reports of new corruption emerge every day. Billions of U.S. dollars are siphoned off by crooked officials and contractors, carried out of the Kabul airport in bags of cash, and even funneled to warlords and the very Taliban that we often oppose. To date, the U.S. has spent nearly half a trillion dollars in Afghanistan, and that pricetag increases by \$10 billion every month that we stay there. Meanwhile, we are forced to cut critical services at home in the face of our rising deficit and financial instability. We continue to hemorrhage finite U.S. resources in Afghanistan, and it makes us less, not more safe.

When will this war end? While the current timeline commits 68,000 troops through 2013, there are reports, backed up by some facts, that in the ongoing talks with the Afghan government about the future of the U.S.-Afghanistan relationship, the U.S. is considering having 35,000 U.S. troops in Afghanistan until 2025 at an expected cost of over \$50 billion a year.

The human cost of this war is immeasurable. The dedication and the commitment of American men and women in uniform is absolute. Our troops in Afghanistan execute their orders that put them at risk because they trust the mission in which they are deployed. That is absolutely essential to our Nation's security. This steadfast loyalty is our Nation's most sacred resource, and thus, it is our most solemn responsibility to ensure that it is never squandered.

There is no U.S. military solution in Afghanistan. A political reconciliation is essential. Afghanistan's future depends upon Afghans, not American soldiers. By ending this war, America can focus on rebuilding the foundations of America's strength and security by paying down our Federal deficit, growing our economy, and putting Americans back to work.

□ 1040

THE PRESIDENT'S OCEAN ZONING PLAN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida (Mr. SOUTHERLAND) for 5 minutes.

Mr. SOUTHERLAND. Madam Speaker, yesterday, in the Natural Resources Committee, we held an oversight hearing regarding the President's new National Ocean Policy, an Executive order to tell us how we can best use our oceans.

Yesterday, it was amazing to hear those who believe in this policy applaud the use of the Federal Government in bringing stakeholders together. I will say this: This particular policy has been driven from the White House through Executive order under the auspices of ocean conservation, when its actual effects will be far reaching, economically harmful and hurtful to American jobs and businesses both at sea as well as ashore.

Inside of this policy, there is something called marine spatial planning, how to best use our oceans, totally ignoring the common sense that the God who created us gave us at the moment He did create us. The background of this goes back quite some time.

In 2009, a task force—I love those here. We have so many. We have councils and task forces. Do you know what? We need to form another committee. Well, I'm of the opinion that had Moses formed another committee, they would still be wandering around in the desert today. However, that's the mode of operation here. And in these frameworks and in these task forces, they come out with effective coastal and marine spatial planning.

I believe this is one of the largest efforts of government regulatory overreach in my lifetime. And with the world being 73 percent water, what better way—for if we can capture and make sure that we determine what people do with these waterways, what better way to push our policies forward, to rob the American people of job opportunities and the freedoms that I believe were given at birth?

The National Ocean Policy is less about coordinating fishing activities with other ocean user activities and more about creating new regulatory processes to further restrict fishing opportunities in both the recreational and commercial fishing sectors, according to the director of public affairs for the At-sea Processors Association.

In my State of Florida, we have a crisis when it comes to homes and when it comes to real estate. Yet I know that homebuilders are going to be damaged greatly because this regulatory push does not just deal with offshore, but it also deals, as I stated, with onshore.

The National Ocean Policy has a potential to create yet another set of standards and/or approvals that could unnecessarily impose significant impacts on homebuilders, private landowners, and other businesses while providing minimal—minimal—effects. Yesterday, we heard that what this plan does is bring together, through an adaptive process, stakeholders. Well, do you know what? We have the ability as stakeholders to communicate now.

Since when do we need the Federal Government to tell us that we can talk