

blast was timed to wreak the maximum havoc, as the bomber detonated at the moment that the crowd was largest, when one group was going into a mosque and another was exiting.

In the 10 years of this war, it's the first attack specifically against Shiites, adding a sectarian angle and religious tension that hadn't previously been prevalent in the Afghanistan conflict.

Mr. Speaker, how can we call our occupation of Afghanistan a success when, after 10 years of attacks like this and making a young woman like BiBi who was talked about on the other side of the aisle earlier this morning, make her victimization and her terrorization commonplace. When this is commonplace, we cannot be having success in Afghanistan.

The truth is our continued military presence is aggravating the violence, not containing it, and certainly not stopping it. I'm not saying that Afghanistan will be magically transformed when the last of our troops leaves; but our best hope for peace, for security and stability there is a swift end to this war.

But here's another important thing, Mr. Speaker. If we do this right and have an end to the war that is meaningful, it would mean the beginning of an even more robust engagement with Afghanistan, an engagement based on the principles of SMART Security, in other words, a peaceful partnership based on mutual respect, assistance to strengthening Afghanistan's democratic infrastructure, not with military force, but with civilian support.

SMART Security would empower the Afghan people investing in their hopes and dreams, instead of bringing further violence to their country. Military redeployment out of Afghanistan can't and won't mean a complete withdrawal from Afghanistan.

So I hope that every single one of my colleagues who has eagerly rubber-stamped war spending year after year, even while complaining about the United States budget deficits, will show the same enthusiasm and the same support for a humanitarian surge in Afghanistan.

I have to shake my head, Mr. Speaker, every time I hear someone say we can't afford such generous foreign aid. Talk about penny wise and pound foolish. Last fiscal year we spent roughly \$2.5 billion on development assistance in Afghanistan. Mr. Speaker, we go through that much war spending in Afghanistan every single week. The bottom line is that smart investments provide more security at a fraction of the cost, pennies on the dollar compared to waging war.

Allowing extreme poverty and widespread unemployment to prevail throughout Afghanistan imperils our national security as much as anything else. Where there's hopelessness, that's where insurgents get a foothold. Nothing breeds terrorism like hardship, deprivation, and despair.

□ 1100

Mr. Speaker, because it's the right thing to do and because it's the best way to protect America, let's bring our troops home and make the transition to SMART Security. And let's do it now.

REGS AGENDA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from North Dakota (Mr. BERG) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BERG. Mr. Speaker, as I talk with North Dakotans, it's clear we're all frustrated with Washington.

ObamaCare is a disastrous law that 70 percent of North Dakotans do not want. Unemployment remains unacceptably high, making it clear that President Obama's government stimulus did not work. Washington bailed out Wall Street while Main Street continues to suffer. And Washington persistently fails to uphold its responsibility to balance the budget.

Meanwhile, the Obama administration continues to pursue overreaching regulations that create more redtape and uncertainty for North Dakota's families, farms, and small businesses. These burdensome regulations threaten job creation, and they are the biggest challenge facing our economy. We need to take serious steps today to halt the Obama administration's regulatory overreach.

That's why I announced my REGS Agenda: Reduce the redtape; Empower the States; Grow the economy; and Stop President Obama's overreach.

This agenda is the result of talking with North Dakotans and learning about the impact of senseless regulations on North Dakota's farmers, ranchers, and small businessmen.

During my recent regulations tour, I spoke with energy providers who are concerned about the EPA's regional haze requirements that could cost North Dakota over \$700 million just to comply. Farmers told me about the forever-changing fuel storage mandates that added new costs. And I heard how the new EPA regulations on gas generators could cost a North Dakota school district a quarter of a million dollars. This cost is not because they are using generators more than allowed; the cost is because the EPA simply doesn't like which hours they're using it.

The REGS Agenda is also the product of feedback I've received from North Dakotans at 10 public town hall hearings I've held this year and through the countless emails, letters, and phone calls. The message was clear: Washington is not the solution, it's the problem.

To get our economy moving again and our country back on track, President Obama and congressional leaders could learn a lot about how we do things in North Dakota. The REGS Agenda is also the product of legisla-

tion I've been working on. Last month, I introduced a bill that would rein in the Obama administration's Federal takeover of the State regional haze management, which threatens to create more business uncertainty and stifle job creation. It will also increase the energy costs for American families and small business. And today, I will proudly vote in support of the REINS Act, which is a much-needed measure to rein in this regulatory overreach.

But this agenda is not simply the sum of this past year; it's also a path moving forward to rein in the overreaching, out-of-touch government regulations that burden small business, farms, and ranches each and every day. I will continue to add to this agenda to fight against the job-killing regulations that threaten small businesses' ability to create jobs and grow our economy.

The number one thing we can do to get our economy back on track, to give small business certainty, to grow and create jobs, is to rein in President Obama's overbearing regulations. They're burdening job creation, and it adds more cost and more redtape. Through the REGS Agenda, I'll continue fighting to bring regulatory relief to the American people.

VOTER SUPPRESSION LAWS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LEE) for 5 minutes.

Ms. LEE of California. Mr. Speaker, first let me take a moment to thank the gentlelady from Ohio, Congresswoman MARCIA FUDGE, for her fearless and tireless leadership in protecting our democracy and the bedrock, of course, of our country, and that is the right to vote. She has done an amazing job keeping us very focused and pointed with all of the information we need to try to address this in a big way.

Once again, I am here today to sound the alarm because, make no mistake about it, the fundamental right to vote which is at the heart of our democracy, it is under attack. Republican legislators and governors are proposing partisan laws that require voters to show government-approved photo IDs before voting.

Now, I came to this floor years ago after the stolen Presidential elections in Florida and in Ohio to protest the results of those two elections that were filled with voter suppression. It worked for the Republicans before, and so legislators in 42 States on this map of shame have doubled down on these strategies to make it harder for certain communities to vote.

These proposals would disenfranchise 21 million Americans. That's over 1 in 10 eligible voters in America who do not have adequate identification. Now, how in the world, for example, would my 100-year-old aunt get her birth certificate to prove who she is to get a government ID to vote? She wouldn't know where to start, nor how to pay

for it. And it's no coincidence that a disproportionate number of these disaffected voters come from communities of color as well as the poor, the elderly, and students.

Fully one in four otherwise qualified African Americans would be unable to vote under these voter-ID laws. Around one in five Asian Americans, Latinos, and young adults between the ages of 18 to 24 would be blocked.

In my home State of California, a voter-ID bill was introduced to suppress voter participation. It would cost \$26 just to get the required documents to qualify for a government-issued ID. Now, having been born and raised in Texas, this certainly looks like a poll tax to me, which those of us remember as a way to prevent African Americans from voting. These voter-ID laws have a partisan agenda seeking to disenfranchise and deny specific populations of voters before they have the opportunity to elect their representatives in government. These partisan laws are shameful, and they're a disgrace to our country.

If these Republican lawmakers were truly concerned with fighting voter fraud, they would take on actual documented problems such as distributing fliers with false information meant to trick voters, improperly purging voters, or tampering with election equipment and forms.

Instead, they are pushing laws designed to change election outcomes by reducing voting, repressing turnout, and turning the clock back to the days of Jim Crow. This is the exact opposite of where our country needs to go. With almost 40 percent of eligible voters regularly staying away from voting booths, we need to be expanding participation in our democracy, making the ballot more accessible, not less. We cannot and we must not allow democracy to be undermined, especially while we're promoting democracy abroad.

We must unmask these shameful attempts to disenfranchise voters. Let's stop this partisan effort that strikes at the very core of our country. Let's win this war against voters. We should be about dismantling and reducing barriers so that we can really begin to reignite the American Dream for those who have lost hope.

So I want to thank my colleagues, especially Congresswoman FUDGE, for their calls to protect the right to vote on behalf of all the citizens across this great Nation.

ENTREPRENEUR STARTUP GROWTH ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California (Ms. CHU) for 5 minutes.

Ms. CHU. America doesn't have a small business problem; it has a start-up problem. That was the title of a recent Washington Post article. It pointed to the fact that self-employed startup businesses have been the chosen al-

ternative for millions of Americans, but we must do more to help them. Today, one out of every three new jobs is created by self-employed startup businesses.

□ 1110

But we can do better. Compared to other wealthy countries, the U.S. ranks 23rd in new businesses formed per thousand working adults. These entrepreneurs take risks to make it on their own, but they could do better if we help them be competitive. That is why yesterday I introduced the Entrepreneur Startup Growth Act.

One of the most intimidating times of the year for new owners is tax season, as they learn and navigate the different tax standards for businesses. My bill turns this tough time into an opportunity by offering not only affordable business tax assistance but business development services so that these companies can get the advice they need in order to grow.

This bill builds on the Self-Employment Tax Initiative launched by CFED, the Corporation for Enterprise Development, a nonprofit economic opportunity organization. According to CFED, nearly two-thirds of all self-employed people are operating business startups.

Self-employed startups in their first year of existence create an average of 3 million jobs per year. In fact, without business startups, there would be no net job growth in the U.S. economy. Nearly all net job creation since 1980 has occurred in self-employed startups less than 5 years old. They are critical to our economy.

In my bill, community-based organizations, local governments, and higher education institutions are eligible to apply for grants up to \$75,000 to operate this program. The IRS will work with the Small Business Administration to ensure that the operators of the program have expertise in both tax assistance and business development assistance.

This is a program that works. With such a modest investment in this assistance, 62 percent of businesses were able to get refundable tax credits such as EITC and Making Work Pay, refunds that they might otherwise have missed out on. The Entrepreneur Startup Growth Act will help businesses grow and help low-income households build the assets that they need in order to survive. They will get the economic security they desire. With this, we will be able to help people climb up that ladder of opportunity and reach for that American Dream.

RAPE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT IN THE MILITARY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California (Ms. SPEIER) for 5 minutes.

Ms. SPEIER. I rise again today for the 13th time to talk about a stain on the American people, a stain on the

American Government. I'm talking about military assault and rape. I'm talking about the 19,000 soldiers each year who are victims of sexual assault or rape in the military. Those are figures by the Department of Defense. Yet only 13 percent will report because they know that if they do report, they will be summarily removed from service. In fact, 90 percent of them are involuntarily honorably discharged from the military after they report a rape.

So what are we doing about it? Well, I have good news this morning to report. A few weeks ago, not far from here, a nonprofit organization, Protect Our Defenders, was born. It was launched to give voices to survivors of sexual assault in our military. More than 6,000 Americans have signed survivor Terry Odum's petition, whose story I've told here on the floor.

Terry's petition demands Congress take the reporting of sexual assault and rape outside the normal chain of command. I imagine many of my colleagues have received emails and tweets or Facebook messages from their constituents about this issue. This is a movement, and we must address it. Our troops protect us, and we must protect them. Both Republicans and Democrats should be able to agree that we need to fix this system.

Today, I'm going to tell you the story of Petty Officer Amber De Roche. Petty Officer De Roche served in the Navy from December 2000, to December 2005. In August of 2001, Petty Officer De Roche was raped by two shipmates in a hotel while on port of call in Thailand. One assailant ripped off Petty Officer De Roche's clothes and held her down while the other assailant raped her. The assailants repeatedly took turns holding her down while the other would rape her. After they had their way with her, one of the rapists threw her in the shower in an attempt to wash off the evidence. They then kicked her out of the room and onto the unfamiliar streets of Thailand.

The following day, Petty Officer De Roche, with the help of a friend, went to get a medical exam. Petty Officer De Roche was bruised and injured to such a degree during the assault that the physician had to stop the exam and began to cry.

Petty Officer De Roche decided to report her horrific experience to her command. What was her reward? She became the target of severe harassment, was imprisoned in the medical ward, and denied food. I know this sounds unbelievable, but this is going on in our military.

When Petty Officer De Roche was released from the medical ward, her command refused to let her leave the ship and forced her to be on call 24 hours a day without receiving any counseling to help her cope with having been raped. Petty Officer De Roche sought out the ship's chaplain and told him she was suicidal as a result of the rapes and her subsequent mistreatment. Petty Officer De Roche was finally permitted to leave her ship and serve out