

in the southwest, have received EDA funds. So too have port authorities in Toledo and Ashtabula—the Presiding Officer's border with Erie—in that part of Ohio and entrepreneurs in Cleveland and Appalachia.

If we are going to strengthen our competitiveness, communities will need to equip businesses with the tools they need to survive, and communities will need to create higher skill, living wage jobs and attract private investment.

That is what EDA is designed to do; it is the “front door” for communities facing sudden and severe economic distress.

When economic disaster hits, communities turn to the government, and in so many cases it is EDA that does the job.

EDA has helped redevelop the former GM plant in Moraine—several thousand GM jobs, Frigidaire jobs. Because of EDA, local partnerships, and outside private investments, we expect to see hundreds and hundreds, maybe a few thousand jobs in manufacturing in that Moraine plant. We have seen EDA help redevelop the DHL plant in Wilmington. Ashtabula's Plant C received EDA investments to make vital repairs. The bill Republicans just blocked us from even voting on would have strengthened a proven job-creating program.

How many times do we hear about businesses worried about uncertainty created in a still recovering economy? This bill would have provided certainty in funding for an established job-creating problem. It would have reduced regulatory burdens to increase flexibility for grantees. It would have encouraged public-private partnerships that we have already seen make a difference across Ohio.

I offered two amendments that would have further strengthened EDA. One would have assisted former auto communities when a plant closure or downsizing causes economic distress, such as Wilmington or Moraine.

The other would have made more Ohio communities eligible to receive funds for business incubators. Ohio is the home of the National Business Incubator Association—the trade association for all incubators in southeast Ohio and Athens. We have a model for business incubators in Toledo, Youngstown, and now Shaker Heights.

This amendment would have allowed more Ohio communities to support homegrown entrepreneurship.

Republican Senators chose to bog down the EDA bill with other unrelated amendments. All of them were unrelated to the task at hand; that is, how do we create jobs? Just yesterday, I was at Cleveland State University, where its Veteran Student Success Program goes above and beyond in serving our Nation's veterans.

Unemployment among young Americans is especially acute and disproportionately affects young veterans, and that is an outrage. Today, the unem-

ployment rate for returning servicemembers between 20 and 24 is 27 percent—almost 3 times the national unemployment average. That means more than one in four veterans can't find a job to support his or her family, easing the transition to civilian life. When our economy needs their skills, when veterans can get the job done, too often veterans are turned away. Cleveland State University has a Project SERV Program to ensure servicemembers who return home and into the classroom receive the educational benefits they earned and deserve. Imagine the difficulty for someone 25 years old, who has done two combat tours in Iraq, who comes back to Cleveland or to Philadelphia or anywhere else in this country and tries to integrate into a classroom of 18- and 19-year-olds who have seen nothing like the 25-year-old who has been in combat in Iraq or Afghanistan.

This Project SERV at Cleveland State has been groundbreaking and is one of the few in the country—and now at Youngstown State University. What they are doing is establishing veteran support programs at colleges and universities. It started as an idea at a community roundtable I convened at Cleveland State a few years ago. It became law in the last Congress, and we have ensured its funding.

Yesterday, I met with Clarence Rowe, a staff sergeant in the Marine Corps, who is using the veterans resources at CSU to translate his military skills to the needs of the civilian job market. But as much as CSU and other universities do to assist our veterans, high unemployment continues to hurt all Americans. Too often, people such as Staff Sergeant Rowe, who has put years into serving his country, come back and, even with developing their job skills in school, they simply can't find jobs.

Education, workforce investment, and EDA have long been sound Federal investments that have helped to create jobs and strengthen our economy. It is a shame Republicans have yet again placed a roadblock on the pathway toward a strong and more prosperous middle class. We can do better than that.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

AFGHANISTAN

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I rise tonight to speak about our policy in Afghanistan. We know the President is about to announce a major decision on the policy. As the President determines the degree and scope of the drawdown in Afghanistan, there will be a lot of debate, about troop levels, principally. But while this is an important discussion, we need to step back and com-

prehensively focus on overall U.S. strategic interests in the region.

Over the course of my time in the Senate, some 4½ years now, I have participated in more than 20 Foreign Relations Committee hearings on Afghanistan and Pakistan. This week we will hear from Secretary Clinton on the U.S. policy on both Afghanistan and Pakistan. I personally chaired four hearings on U.S. policy in the region. I have traveled to Afghanistan and Pakistan on two occasions, and met with our military and civilian leadership as well as senior government officials in both countries. I have spoken repeatedly on the Senate floor about the importance of accountability of U.S. military and civilian programs.

When it comes to matters of war, the Senate has a special responsibility to ask questions and to hold the executive branch accountable no matter what party is in the White House. I have taken this responsibility very seriously and have repeatedly questioned and examined U.S. policy in south Asia.

There has been substantial progress in Afghanistan. On the battlefield, the United States coalition and Afghan forces have rolled back advances made by the Taliban. We have made measurable, albeit fragile, gains on security in key provinces of the country. Al-Qaida, operating from Pakistan, has been significantly degraded.

There has also been measurable progress in the education and health fields. Only 900,000 boys and no girls attended school under the Taliban. Today more than 6 million children are in school and a third of them are girls. In the field of health, more than 85 percent of Afghans now have access to at least some form of health care, up from 9 percent in the year 2002.

These gains have not come without immeasurable sacrifice on the part of our Armed Forces and of course their families. In Pennsylvania we have lost 30 servicemembers killed in action in Operation Enduring Freedom since 2001. To date, 461 have been wounded, some of them grievously wounded.

In Iraq, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania lost 197 servicemembers killed in action and 1,233 were wounded. These courageous men and women gave what many years ago Lincoln called “the last full measure of devotion” to their country. We owe them a debt of gratitude. We owe the same debt of gratitude to their families and to all veterans and their families returning from the battlefield.

After this exhaustive review, and based upon measurable gains in Afghanistan, I believe the United States can shift from a strategy of counterinsurgency toward an increased focus on counterterrorism. It is time for the United States to lighten its footprint in the country. It is also a time to accelerate the shift in responsibility to Afghan forces and for a drawdown of a significant number of United States troops from Afghanistan. The capabilities of both al-Qaida and the Taliban have been severely degraded.

The United States-led development projects have strengthened the health and education sectors, as I mentioned before. At a time of economic austerity here in the United States, the approximately \$120 billion per year pricetag is, for sure, unsustainable. We must take a significant shift in our strategy.

As chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Near Eastern, South, Central Asian Affairs, I am focused on our broader national security interests in both regions. We must focus on extremist groups that have the capability and intent to project terrorism on the United States homeland and interests around the world. We should continue to conduct counterterrorism operations on al-Qaida, Pakistani Taliban, and others who seek to strike the United States homeland and our interests.

Significant challenges, however, do remain and the United States should focus on the following. First, we must redouble our efforts to train the Afghan security forces. We made substantial progress in recruiting and training, but this needs to be ramped up. In the long run, Afghanistan's ability to deny safe haven to al-Qaida or any terrorist organization will depend upon a strong and durable army and police in Afghanistan.

Second, much work remains in Pakistan. In Senate hearings and meetings with U.S. and Pakistani officials, I have questioned Pakistan's full commitment to addressing the extremist threat within its borders. For example, Pakistan has done little to stop the flow of bomb components across the border into Afghanistan, where they are used against our troops. Terrorists in Pakistan have the capability to strike internationally, and have done so in recent years.

These terrorists are also the central threat to the Pakistani state itself, a concern that grows as Pakistan inexplicably expands its nuclear arsenal.

The Pakistani people have suffered greatly in the struggle against these extremist groups as thousands of civilians and security forces have died. This is precisely why it is so unfortunate that the Pakistani Government is not fully committed to confronting this threat.

I have been very patient with respect to this critical relationship, but I am compelled to speak the truth when the stakes are so high for the American people. The United States troops and the people of Pakistan both have a lot at stake, in addition to the American people. In my judgment, recent developments are unacceptable and merit a serious examination of U.S. aid to Pakistan. The Senate should hold hearings so we have a full accounting of Pakistan's efforts to combat terrorism.

The third area of our focus should be the grave concerns that many of us have—and I have for sure—about the future of women and girls in Afghanistan. If nothing else, we cannot lose

precious ground gained in rights for this critical 50 percent of the population—women and girls. Over the past 10 years, women have assumed seats in Parliament and girls have returned to school. I mentioned the number earlier. Women's rights have become a part of the public dialog at long last.

When speaking to a group of Afghan women in May, Secretary of State Clinton said, "We will not abandon you, we will stand with you always."

We must as a nation stand by this commitment to the women and girls who live in Afghanistan. Empowered women are the most influential voice to dissuade young men from taking up arms in Afghanistan and places around the world. These women are the most likely to develop their own communities as well.

Finally and most importantly, it is our moral obligation to protect those who are most vulnerable in Afghanistan.

I have significant concerns about governance in Afghanistan. I have closely examined Afghanistan's uneven governance record and have serious questions about the viability of the democratic experiment in that country. The foundational act of democracy, elections, has not met international standards in Afghanistan and has established the basis for an unresponsive government and unresponsive government officials and corruption.

As the United States draws down its military presence, the international community must renew its focus on governance in Afghanistan and efficient disbursement of U.S. assistance. A recent Senate Foreign Relations Committee report suggests that we must do a better job of accounting for the resources spent on bolstering the Afghan Government.

In conclusion, we have made progress in Afghanistan all these years. The surge in U.S. troops, working with coalition forces and the Afghan Army, has rolled back gains made by the Taliban. Our special forces have killed Osama bin Laden and several other senior al-Qaida leaders. The numbers and capabilities of the Afghan security forces have increased. Women and girls are better off than they were in the year 2001, and the health sector has improved.

Significant challenges remain, but based upon these advances and on the significant costs of our current policy, it is time, after 10 long years, to begin the drawdown process.

I yield the floor.

TRIBUTE TO DR. CONRAD JONES

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I rise to recognize a distinguished doctor and Kentuckian, Dr. Conrad Jones. Dr. Jones has risen to become one of the most admired and applauded physicians in the Bluegrass State, a feat that was recognized at the Murray-Calloway County Hospital in 2007 when they opened their new women's health

facility and named it the Conrad Jones Women's Pavilion. As Dr. Jones has contributed to the field of women's health for six decades now, it was a very fitting tribute.

When Dr. Jones was born in 1922, there was not yet the MRI, the ultrasound or the home pregnancy test. Dr. Jones's father, Dr. Cody Jones, was also a physician, and a young Conrad would accompany him on his rounds as a country doctor. The Jones family had come to Kentucky from the Carolinas and Tennessee before the Civil War. Conrad's mother was a school teacher who taught in Hazel and at Murray High School.

Conrad remembers his father worked long, hard hours. His father would have preferred that Conrad become a farmer instead of a doctor, in fact, because a doctor's life was too hard. Luckily for the people of Kentucky, Conrad did not take that particular piece of advice.

Dr. Conrad Jones attended Murray State and then went to medical school at the University of Louisville. After serving his country in uniform, he returned to Murray, KY, to work at what was then the new city-county hospital and its obstetrics unit. He helped patients from the immediate area as well as all over Marshall, Graves and Henry counties.

Dr. Jones has practiced medicine in Murray so long he can tell you the history of how medicine and medical technology has advanced in the area. Dr. Jones certainly keeps up with the technology, and is proud that Murray has what he calls by today's standards state-of-the-art facilities.

I wish to commend Dr. Conrad Jones for his many decades of service to his community. The people of Murray, Calloway County and Kentucky are lucky to have him. I know my colleagues join me when I say this U.S. Senate is grateful to him and his family for all he has contributed to make ours a stronger country.

The Murray-Calloway County Chamber of Commerce published a 2008 Viewbook that contained an illuminating article detailing Dr. Conrad Jones's life and career. I ask unanimous consent that the article be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the article was ordered to be printed, as follows:

[From the Murray-Calloway County Chamber of Commerce 2008 Viewbook]

MURRAY'S CONRAD JONES: A LIFE IN MEDICINE
(By Robert A. Valentine)

In February 2007, the Murray-Calloway County Hospital opened a state-of-the-art facility dedicated to women's health. Almost everyone there recognized the appropriate name of the new facility: The Conrad Jones Women's Pavilion. Dr. Conrad Jones, who had already witnessed six decades of progress in women's health, was looking on in a state of near-speechless humility.

He was born long before the MRI, the ultrasound or even the home pregnancy test. Most women had yet to vote in their first presidential election, and all but a very, very few babies were born at home. It was a warm October in 1922.