

[Rollcall Vote No. 100 Leg.]

## YEAS—16

Barrasso	Johnson (WI)	Sessions
Coburn	Lee	Shelby
Crapo	McConnell	Thune
DeMint	Moran	Vitter
Enzi	Paul	
Hatch	Risch	

## NAYS—83

Akaka	Franken	Merkley
Alexander	Gillibrand	Mikulski
Ayotte	Graham	Murkowski
Baucus	Grassley	Murray
Begich	Hagan	Nelson (NE)
Bennet	Harkin	Nelson (FL)
Bingaman	Heller	Portman
Blumenthal	Hoeven	Pryor
Blunt	Hutchison	Reed
Boozman	Inhofe	Reid
Boxer	Inouye	Roberts
Brown (MA)	Isakson	Rockefeller
Brown (OH)	Johanns	Rubio
Burr	Johnson (SD)	Sanders
Cantwell	Kerry	Schumer
Cardin	Klobuchar	Shaheen
Carper	Kohl	Snowe
Casey	Kyl	Stabenow
Chambliss	Landrieu	Tester
Coats	Lautenberg	Toomey
Cochran	Leahy	Udall (CO)
Collins	Levin	Udall (NM)
Conrad	Lieberman	Warner
Coons	Lugar	Webb
Corker	Manchin	Whitehouse
Cornyn	McCain	Wicker
Durbin	McCasikill	Wyden
Feinstein	Menendez	

## NOT VOTING—1

Kirk

The motion was rejected.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, if I can have everyone's attention, we have one more vote this evening. The Republican leader and I have worked out something tentatively—I think we will be able to put it in writing in just a few minutes—where we will have two votes tomorrow at noon on the two Fed nominees.

I think most people know I moved last night to the FDA bill. I hope we won't have to file cloture on that and that we can just move to it and start the amendment process. That is what the people want, that is what we want, and that is what we are willing to do, so I hope we can do that. It is a wide-ranging bill, extremely important for the country, with relevant amendments. There are a lot of them to do, so I hope we can have an agreement to that effect.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will now be 2 minutes of debate equally divided before the vote on the motion to proceed to S. Con. Res. 44 introduced by the Senator from Utah, Mr. LEE.

The Senator from Utah.

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, I remind my colleagues of the old adage that you can make excuses or you can make progress but you cannot make both.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, the Senator deserves to be heard.

Mr. LEE. I remind my colleagues of the old adage that you can make excuses or you can make progress but you cannot make both—at least not simultaneously.

Our current course is unsustainable. Maintaining the status quo will inevi-

tably impair our ability to fund everything from defense to entitlements. So sticking to this course isn't the solution. It can't be the solution. And if followed as a solution, it will have an impact that will prove devastating to America's most vulnerable populations. It is for exactly that reason I have proposed this budget—a budget that balances within 5 years, a budget that simplifies the Tax Code, a budget that puts health care decisions back into the hands of individual families, individuals themselves, and their doctors, where those decisions properly belong.

We don't have much time. We have to get this done. I urge my colleagues to support this budget.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, this budget proposal has the most serious mistakes I have seen in 26 years of dealing with budgets in this Chamber. This budget starts with an \$8 trillion mistake on the size of the deficit.

I have put up the calculation. This budget has Federal revenues of \$27.5 trillion, budget outlays of \$37.2 trillion, for a difference of \$9.750 trillion. But it claims deficits of \$1.750 trillion. That is an \$8 trillion mistake.

No. 2, it has a \$5.7 trillion mistake with respect to budget authority. If we add up the individual budget function totals, they are \$5.7 trillion less than the aggregate budget authority totals in what is being offered by the Senator.

No. 3, this requires some committees to cut more spending than they have available to them in their resources. For example, the HELP Committee is instructed to save \$2.7 trillion, and they only have \$510 billion available to them to cut.

This budget is shot full of basic fundamental mistakes. It should not even be considered as a budget on the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator's time has expired.

The question is on agreeing to the motion.

Mr. LEE. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. KYL. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Illinois (Mr. KIRK).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 17, nays 82, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 101 Leg.]

## YEAS—17

Barrasso	Grassley	Paul
Coats	Hatch	Risch
Coburn	Inhofe	Sessions
Crapo	Johnson (WI)	Thune
DeMint	Lee	Vitter
Enzi	Moran	

## NAYS—82

Akaka	Gillibrand	Murkowski
Alexander	Graham	Murray
Ayotte	Hagan	Nelson (NE)
Baucus	Harkin	Nelson (FL)
Begich	Heller	Portman
Bennet	Hoeven	Pryor
Bingaman	Hutchison	Reed
Blumenthal	Inouye	Reid
Blunt	Isakson	Roberts
Boozman	Johanns	Rockefeller
Boxer	Johnson (SD)	Rubio
Brown (MA)	Kerry	Sanders
Brown (OH)	Klobuchar	Schumer
Burr	Kohl	Shaheen
Cantwell	Kyl	Shelby
Cardin	Landrieu	Snowe
Carper	Lautenberg	Stabenow
Casey	Leahy	Tester
Chambliss	Levin	Toomey
Cochran	Lieberman	Udall (CO)
Collins	Lugar	Udall (NM)
Conrad	Manchin	Warner
Coons	McCain	Webb
Corker	McCasikill	Whitehouse
Cornyn	McConnell	Wicker
Durbin	Menendez	Wyden
Feinstein	Merkley	
Franken	Mikulski	

## NOT VOTING—1

Kirk

The motion was rejected.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table.

## STOP THE STUDENT LOAN INTEREST RATE HIKE ACT OF 2012—MOTION TO PROCEED—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

(The remarks of Senators GRASSLEY and LANDRIEU pertaining to the submission of S. Res. 462 are printed in today's RECORD under "Submitted Resolutions.")

Ms. LANDRIEU.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BENNET). The Senator from Kansas.

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to address the Senate as in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

## FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, today we considered five separate budget proposals for the Federal Government. At first glance, that would appear to be the fiscally responsible thing to do. The families and small business owners I talk to back home in Kansas do that every year. They operate with a budget, and we know the Federal Government needs to do so as well. However, this Chamber has not passed a budget in 1,113 days. That is more than 3 years.

In my first speech on the Senate floor as a new Member of the Senate a little more than a year ago, I indicated to my Senate colleagues that my greatest concern for our country is our Nation's out-of-control spending. I am here today because I still have that concern. We spend too much money, and we no longer can delay the difficult decisions necessary to correct that problem.

Our national debt stands at more than \$15 trillion. This enormous

amount of debt is slowing our economic recovery and threatening the prosperity of our future generations, who will have to pay for our fiscal irresponsibility.

Writing and passing a budget is one of the most basic responsibilities of Congress. It is required by law. The budget sets forth priorities and guidelines for the fiscal year and begins the process of determining how much money should be spent and which programs should be cut back, eliminated, or even further supported. Without a budget, the annual appropriations process—and I am a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, and I want the appropriations process to work, but in many ways that appropriations process continues to be on hold. This is not the way to run our country. To put our country back on its path to fiscal responsibility, we must set the budget. We set budget limits, and then we have to stick to them.

Any serious conversation about the budget and Federal spending must include a candid assessment of our Nation's entitlement programs. Those programs include Social Security and Medicare. Mandatory spending makes up 56 percent of the Federal budget—if we had one. This percentage will only increase in years ahead as more Americans retire and fewer workers are there to replace them. Without addressing our long-term commitments, our attempts to significantly change our country's fiscal outlook will be limited.

As I said, I am a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, where our appropriations process deals with about 30 percent of spending on an annual basis. We have done a reasonable job—I hate to be overly complimentary to Congress—at holding the line on discretionary spending, that 30 percent we deal with every year. It has been pretty flatlined over the last several years, but you cannot solve our country's fiscal problems by only dealing with the 30 percent that we include in the appropriations process. We have to deal with the remaining portions of our budget.

The challenge of not only the appropriations process to determine how much money we spend every year but the broader issues of so-called entitlement spending cannot be ignored any longer. Of the five budgets we considered earlier today, four of them—all but President Obama's budget—contained serious proposals to these entitlements. I can critique every one of the four budgets that move in the right direction of balancing the budget. There are things I would do differently, but I commend my colleagues for offering serious solutions to serious problems.

It has bothered me greatly that when Members of the House or Members of the Senate offer a serious budget, they are immediately attacked from a political point of view as if we can continue to ignore the problems we face and

simply make sound bites out of proposals that Members of the Senate and the House care very seriously about.

We have to work together to put forward commonsense solutions that will preserve these programs for future generations. This is not about ending those entitlement programs. In fact, the reports that recently came from nonpartisan sources tell us that both Medicare and Social Security will face significant shortfalls in the near future. Therefore, this is about taking care of those programs to see that they are available for those who need them in the future. I want to be able to tell every young person—when they ask, will I be able to get Social Security when I retire, I want that answer to be yes. If we don't deal with the issues, the answer cannot honestly be yes.

In Congress, we have a solemn obligation to be good stewards of taxpayer dollars. Our spending debate is often-times seen as something that is philosophical or academic or more likely just a partisan argument, but the truth is that out-of-control borrowing and spending has a very real consequence on the daily lives of every American and certainly on the economy in which we live and operate. It is about whether Americans can find a job, make payments on their homes and automobiles, and whether their children will have a bright future and the opportunity to pursue what we all call the American dream.

When we continue to fail to balance the budget, when we don't put ourselves on the path toward a balanced budget, it means increasing inflation, with higher interest rates and an uncertain economy, which results in fewer business investments and fewer jobs.

The greatest opportunity we have to improve the lives of Americans is to erect an environment where employers feel comfortable in investing in the future and create jobs so people can go back to work. When they go back to work, they can put food on their family's table, they can save for their children's education, they can save for their own retirement, and most importantly, every person in America will once again be able to pursue the American dream.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

#### SURFACE TRANSPORTATION ACT

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I would like to address a slightly different topic, which is the continuing conference on the highway bill. We passed a very good highway bill in the Senate. We passed it on time for the March 31 deadline when the highway trust fund was going to expire. We passed it in bipartisan fashion, with 75 Senators supporting it. We passed it after it came unanimously out of the Environment and Public Works Committee with the support of the chairman, Senator BOXER, and the ranking member, Senator INHOFE. We passed it

after a very open and transparent floor process in which around 40 amendments were agreed to either by vote or agreement, and it has the support of everybody from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce to labor, from the pavers to the environmentalists. So it is a good piece of legislation. It was done right.

The problem is that it is running up against a time deadline. As my director of transportation tells me, if we delay this too long, he has to start dropping projects off of this summer's highway work period because the time is slipping away as we dawdle here in Congress on this bill.

It is not just the Rhode Island Department of Transportation saying this. Standard & Poor's Global Credit Portal has a report, "Increasingly Unpredictable Federal Funding Could Stall U.S. Transportation Infrastructure Projects."

It says within the report:

As the construction season begins in the northern half of the country, this continuing uncertainty in funding could force states to delay projects rather than risk funding changes or political gridlock come July.

So we need to get this done, and I have heard at this point that the House Republican conferees intend to hold the conference on this bill through late June, and if we do that, that will cost jobs in America, that will cost jobs in Rhode Island, that will cost jobs around the country because our transportation directors are going to have to take work scheduled for the summer and postpone it, and that is a very unfortunate turn of events. It has nothing to do with the merits.

Unfortunately, the House was not able to pass a highway bill of any kind, which is unfortunate because it is not the most complicated task. It is something we have been doing for decades around here. They couldn't get that done, and so what they have done now is gone to conference on the Senate bill without a bill of their own, and this appears to be causing delay. So I am here to urge that we all encourage the House Members of the highway conference committee to expedite their work as much as they can. Apparently there is a 2-week period that the House is taking off, and if it is delayed by 2 weeks so that Members can go home, I don't think that is a profitable use of our time.

There is a great deal of loose talk around here about jobs. We have even had bills that didn't relate to jobs called jobs bills because of gimmickry in the title. But this is a real jobs bill. This is 3.9 million jobs for the country, and it is 9,000 jobs for Rhode Island, as calculated in years of work—job years. We are just wasting that if we don't get this done on time.

So if people really want to do something about jobs, they can get the highway bill moved along rapidly so that the work can be done in this summer work session.

I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### AFGHANISTAN

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I rise tonight to speak about the war in Afghanistan. I have spoken on the Senate floor many times over the last number of years about the war. I have done so because I believe the American people and our servicemembers in the field deserve a policy worthy of their efforts and their sacrifice and a thorough examination of the issues at hand. I have done so also because when it comes to matters of war, the Senate has an important responsibility to ask tough questions of any administration.

I believe we are entering a critical phase in our engagement in Afghanistan which will have implications for our eventual drawdown of troops in the year 2014.

Earlier this month the President spoke to us from Kabul on the new Strategic Partnership Agreement known by the acronym SPA. Of course, this is an agreement with Afghanistan. He described a transition plan which focuses on protecting and promoting shared Democratic values, advancing long-term security, reinforcing regional security and cooperation, social and economic development, and strengthening Afghan institutions and governance.

I agree with the general approach laid out in the Strategic Partnership Agreement, but I have several outstanding questions and concerns regarding U.S. engagement in Afghanistan. I wish to describe some of these concerns and lay out specific steps the administration should take with respect to the war to ensure that U.S. security interests and the tangible security, political, and economic gains in Afghanistan are, in fact, protected.

I have participated in more than 20 hearings on Afghanistan and Pakistan with the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations. I have personally chaired four hearings on aspects of our engagements in the region. I have visited Afghanistan and Pakistan three times, most recently in August 2011, with the Presiding Officer, Senator BENNET, along with Senator BLUMENTHAL and Senator WHITEHOUSE. When we were there, we met with, as I have done on other visits, U.S. military and civilian leaders, as well as senior government officials in both countries.

Through this engagement, I have sought to examine U.S. goals and progress in this war within three broad areas: first, the formation of representative political institutions; second, the overall security environment; and third, the development of key sectors

in Afghan society, including education, health, the economy, and the well-being of women and girls. In examining these factors, it is clear to me that a responsible drawdown of U.S. and international forces in Afghanistan must be concurrent with not only progress on security and an increase in well-trained Afghan national security forces but with a strong commitment to a transparent political process in Afghanistan.

We should work to ensure that there will not be a crumbling of institutions similar to that seen prior to Afghanistan's civil war in the 1990s. In fact, without representative political institutions, I am concerned that the training of the Afghan national security forces could, in fact, be counterproductive and that we would end up developing a force that answers to a dysfunctional political system.

Politics and governing institutions matter a great deal, and there are tangible steps the United States can take to support Afghanistan's political development in the short term. Let me be clear. We should be under no illusions that Afghanistan's political system will, nor necessarily should, reflect our Western model developed over centuries. But there are universal principles that should apply in Afghanistan, including the inclusion of all key political groups and transparency in elections and governance. In fact, the adoption of these universal principles is perhaps the only antidote to continued decades of conflict.

First, the 2014 transition to Afghan leadership will require the active participation of the constellation of ethnic groups in Afghanistan. They will need to have some confidence in the political process or Afghanistan could very easily again descend into civil conflict, similar to that seen in the aftermath of the Soviet withdrawal in the 1990s. The opposition represented in what was formerly known as the Northern Alliance will likely be among the most skeptical. The United States can play an important role in bringing the interested parties together for dialog to identify areas of concern and a path forward looking toward 2014 and beyond.

Second, Presidential elections are scheduled to take place in 2014. According to the Constitution, President Hamid Karzai is limited to two terms and should step down. President Karzai has seen his country through a very difficult and historic time. Afghanistan's elections—the foundational act in a democratic system—have historically not met international standards and have established the basis for an unresponsive government, unresponsive government officials, and, unfortunately, widespread corruption. A peaceful transition of power in Afghanistan is not only good for the country and good for its democratic institution, it is vital to our own transition out of Afghanistan.

Third, Afghanistan's Independent Electoral Commission needs to become

a truly independent body. Currently, the President selects the commissioners, creating the suspicion that the body is biased. In accordance with international standards, the commissioners should be selected by a body that reflects the broad consensus of the Afghan people, not just the President. A statutory check on executive authority is needed to ensure the impartiality of the body in the years to come and enhance public confidence in the electoral system overall.

Fourth, President Karzai has issued a Presidential decree which allows him to nominate the 5 national and 133 provincial commissioners of the Electoral Complaints Commission. This body also needs to be independent from the executive branch to remove any perception of bias. During the last election, there was a lack of transparency in the handling of these electoral complaints. Afghan authorities need to take steps now to ensure that the national and provincial commissioners are fair and transparent in their work. As it stands now, the political opposition does not trust the Electoral Complaints Commission to equitably deal with inevitable disputes that emerge from the process.

Throughout this process, the United States should emphasize the importance of international standards in the conduct of elections and stand ready to support a process that is based on those universally accepted principles. We know at the Bonn conference in 2011 Afghanistan pledged—pledged—to strengthen and improve its electoral process. We must hold them to that commitment. The United States should condition its aid in support of the administration of the 2014 election based on these reforms. Let's send a very clear message: We will not be a party to funding the administration of an election similar to those conducted in the years 2009 and 2010. The administration must begin to act now. Electoral reforms take time to adopt and implement. The clock is ticking.

While political challenges abound in Afghanistan, the Parliament has emerged as an important check on the executive and over the past several years has begun to exercise more of a voice in governance. We have seen several examples in recent years where the Parliament has weighed in on important issues. Moreover, 27 percent of the Afghan Parliamentarians are women—a stunning statistic compared to where we were 10 years ago. The Parliament's upward trajectory is a promising pillar of the democratization process, but more can be done. The United States can play an important role in exposing Afghan Parliamentarians to legislative experiences from other and different developing democracies and the opportunity to meet their counterparts in other Parliaments.

During our trip to Afghanistan last August, I and Senators WHITEHOUSE, BENNET, and BLUMENTHAL had the fortunate opportunity to travel to five of

the ISAF regional commands. We saw firsthand the progress made by our airmen, soldiers, marines, and sailors on the ground. Due to their efforts, the enemy has lost territory and influence. According to the Pentagon, the number of attacks by militants dropped in 2011 for the first time in 5 years.

There has been undeniable progress in pushing back the Taliban, but these military gains are delicate and will be short-lived without an Afghan force that can assume more responsibility for security. I discussed these issues with LTG William Caldwell, the former commander of the NATO effort to train the Afghan forces. Lieutenant General Caldwell has been ably replaced by LTG Daniel Bolger. We have seen significant progress in the training and deployment of the Afghan Special Forces Units which, according to the Pentagon, have made “impressive strides towards becoming an independent and effective force.” We have also seen growing independence of the Afghan regular units. As of the end of March, 13 ANA kandaks have been designated as able to operate independently with advisers. In September of 2011, there was only one kandak with that designation. We have gone from 1 unit to 13 in a rather short period of time, so we know there is progress.

But despite this progress, however, challenges in training the Afghan National Security Forces, in fact, remain.

First, the Afghan security forces still do not have an elite Pashtun officer corps and only 6.6 percent of the enlisted recruits are southern Pashtuns. This is a significant shortfall that must be addressed if the security forces are going to develop the cohesion necessary to ably represent the ethnic makeup of the country and address ongoing security challenges in the south.

Second, NATO currently requires 2,774 trainers to conduct its training mission but faces a shortfall of 440 positions. While this capability has improved, the training shortfall remains stubbornly high and has an adverse impact on NATO's ability to adequately train the Afghans in a timely manner. Our NATO partners can and should do more to help address this deficit.

Finally, I have concerns about the long-term pricetag associated with the Afghan National Security Forces. While investing in these forces will be a fraction—a small fraction—of the \$100 billion to \$120 billion a year currently spent in Afghanistan by our government, we must work to ensure that the force is right-sized to the security challenges in the country and that there are strict accountability measures in place to ensure that the Afghan National Security Forces abide by all U.S. standards in terms of human rights and the Geneva Conventions.

While we have made progress on the battlefield, the Taliban and terrorist groups like the Haqqani network remain capable of spectacular attacks across the country and, as we know, in Kabul, the capital. Thirty-four percent

of the attacks by militants took place in Regional Command East, an area where the Haqqani network is most active. I believe that the Afghan National Security Forces will be capable by 2014 of providing security in much of the country, but we need to maintain a capability to attack and disrupt terrorist groups in the country that seek to project force outside of Afghanistan's borders and do harm to U.S. interests.

Central to the political effort is the ongoing effort to reconcile with the Taliban. I have a high degree of skepticism that this can work, at least in the short term. The Taliban has shown little interest in compromise, and recent events show that this group is willing to target civilians and to conduct devastating terror attacks against the Afghan people. Ultimately, there does need to be a political end to this conflict, as there is in all wars. But how we get there is important, and the administration must set clear guidelines. In the meantime, I support maintaining pressure on the Taliban until it accepts the Afghan Constitution and agrees to peacefully participate in the political process.

During our visit to Afghanistan last August, we also had the honor to meet with several of Pennsylvania's servicemembers. Since 2001, Pennsylvania has lost 80—80—servicemembers, and 589 have been wounded. These courageous individuals gave what President Lincoln called the “last full measure of devotion” to their country. We owe them a debt of gratitude, and we owe a debt of gratitude, as well, to their families and to veterans returning from the field. I, like a lot of our colleagues, have visited with our wounded warriors and their families at Bethesda, Walter Reed, and other places, and we keep them in our thoughts and prayers every day. The courage and commitment of these young Americans is hard to describe in a speech and it is hard to illustrate, but it does demonstrate the best of who we are as a country, and we see that every day.

We know in the area of development as well, there are enormous challenges across a lot of sectors in Afghanistan that will likely extend for years. Prior to the civil war, Afghanistan was one of the poorest countries in the world. After decades of war, Afghanistan's minimal infrastructure was destroyed. The challenges today to significant progress are indeed substantial. Government corruption obstructs any serious effort at rule of law and any basic respect for contracts, which is a fundamental element of business growth. The precarious security environment also serves to deter any international investment. Poppy growth, fueled by the heroin trade, remains rampant. Women continue to be subjected to unspeakable violence and discrimination across the country.

Amid these daunting challenges, the United States should prioritize a few key areas for developmental progress, so as to mitigate the challenges leading to 2014.

The foundational basis for development in any society is the educational system. We know that in 2002 only 900,000 students were enrolled in school. Just 9 years later, 2011, more than 8 million children were enrolled in school, 35 percent of whom were girls. This will have a long-term, long-lasting effect on Afghan society, and the United States should be proud of this element of our engagement and should seek to protect those gains. I and other Senators, when we saw this, were pleased to see that the partnership agreement prioritized the access to, and the enhanced quality of, education.

We have also seen significant strides in the field of health care. In 2002, only 9 percent of Afghans had access to basic health services. Today that number has grown to 64 percent of the population. More children live to see their fifth birthday than ever before in Afghanistan. Health care too was emphasized in the agreement that the President talked about recently, and it focused on basic health services and specialized care for women and children.

These are real achievements, but they are very fragile.

Also fragile are the overall gains made for women and girls in Afghanistan. I was privileged, as I know Senator BENNET, Senator WHITEHOUSE, and Senator BLUMENTHAL were privileged, to meet with a group of Afghan women leaders during our August 2011 trip. We were all tremendously inspired by their determination to continue to fight for women's rights in the face of blatant oppression and violence.

In 2010, I cochaired a Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing on the plight of women in Afghanistan. We must preserve the progress that women and girls have achieved in the past 10 years. Empowered women have an immensely positive impact on their communities, investing resources in education, health care, and other basic needs. They also dissuade young men from turning to militancy. In 2011, Secretary Clinton told a group of Afghan women—and I am quoting—“We will not abandon you, we will stand with you always.” We as a nation have an obligation to stand by that commitment to the women and girls of Afghanistan. It is not only the right thing to do, it is in our national security interest to do this as well.

I agreed, like many did, with the findings of a 2011 report by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, which made three main recommendations with respect to U.S. assistance to Afghanistan. First, it called for a multiyear civil assistance strategy for the country. Second, the report called for a “Reevaluation of the performance of stabilization programs in conflict zones.” Third, it called for a focus on sustainability. The report argued that all U.S. assistance projects should meet three basic criteria: They should be “necessary, achievable, and sustainable.” This simple concept is critically

important. A great deal of funding and resources has been expended in Afghanistan, much of it on important and necessary programs. But with the withdrawal of international troops and a commensurate decrease of funds going into the country, there is a distinct possibility that Afghanistan could experience an economic depression which could have dramatic security implications. There is time now to address this problem by conducting a careful review of all U.S. assistance to the country. Those programs that are not sustainable should be phased out. While this may have painful short-term consequences, it will be better for the long-term viability of the Afghan economy.

The United States and the international community should consistently reemphasize that while there will be a transition in 2014, this does not mean the wholesale withdrawal and disengagement from Afghanistan. The Strategic Partnership Agreement has helped send this message. The United States will still have significant security concerns in the country and should maintain a strong counterterrorism capability. Work will still remain in providing support and assistance to the Afghan National Security Forces. The international community can also continue to play a key role in helping Afghan society to develop.

All of this falls squarely within our national security interests, and all parties in Afghanistan and in the region should hear this message.

Finally, I will end with a few comments about Pakistan. I continue to believe that Pakistan is too important to U.S. interests for us to sever ties or significantly diminish the relationship. We know we have had trouble in our relationship, but we know a couple of other things as well. Pakistan has lots of nuclear weapons. It is a hotbed of Islamic extremism. It also provides the best logistics routes for our supplies headed into and out of Afghanistan, and Pakistan will play an essential role in ensuring the transition to a peaceful Afghanistan.

Despite the seemingly insurmountable challenges and at times divergent strategic interests, we must continue to find a way forward and work together where our interests do overlap. Pakistan has made significant sacrifices in countering extremism within its borders, mostly against forces that represent a direct threat to the state itself. It has yet to go after the Haqqani network in a serious way. It continues to provide a haven for the Quetta Shura Taliban, which is the headquarters of those seeking to destabilize the Afghan State.

Pakistan has not taken adequate measures to confront the proliferation and trade in illicit bombmaking materials which have killed thousands of its own citizens and hundreds and hundreds of our U.S. troops across the border in Afghanistan. Taking all of this into account, there is a significant ele-

ment of Pakistani society that we cannot consider allies. This is why I strongly support the conditionality built into U.S. assistance to Pakistan, which requires that the Pakistani authorities make significant progress in countering terrorism and attacking IED networks. If they do not take steps to address these issues, this assistance will be significantly cut, and it should be.

For more than 2 years I have worked to address this critical problem of improvised explosive devices, which are responsible for the majority of deaths and injuries among our servicemembers in Afghanistan. The primary explosive ingredient in IEDs used in southern Afghanistan is calcium ammonium nitrate, CAN. It is also used as a fertilizer and is produced in factories in Pakistan. I have been adamant that the Pakistani Government must significantly increase its commitment to regulating the bomb components and preventing them from being smuggled across the border into Afghanistan.

In June 2010 I introduced S. Res. 570, which called for an increased effort by Pakistan to effectively monitor and regulate the manufacture, sale, transport, and use of ammonium nitrate fertilizer in order to prevent its entrance into Afghanistan. The resolution passed the Senate unanimously on June 28, 2010.

During our recent visit to Pakistan, I discussed this issue with several senior government officials, as did Senator BENNET, Senator WHITEHOUSE, and Senator BLUMENTHAL. The Pakistani leaders expressed an interest in countering the proliferation of bomb components and presented to us an action plan for interdicting these materials. However, the proof of their commitment has yet to be seen through the implementation of this plan.

In December of 2011, I introduced an amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act that would require the Secretary of Defense to certify that Pakistan is demonstrating a continuing commitment to and making significant efforts toward the implementation of a strategy to counter IEDs. This provision, unfortunately, was removed during the conference committee. The final version of the bill requires the Secretary of Defense to produce a report on Pakistan's efforts to counter IEDs.

I continue to believe combating the threat posed by IEDs is one area where our interests do in fact overlap with Pakistan. At this time of frayed relations, IEDs continue to kill Pakistanis, Afghans, and, of course, Americans on the battlefield. By working together against this common threat, we can begin to rebuild confidence in the relationship and make progress toward more vexing strategic issues that affect our countries.

In September of 2010, I gave a speech on Afghanistan and Pakistan at the Army War College in Carlisle, PA. Former Secretary of War Elihu Root

believed that the Army War College was established in 1903, "not to promote war, but to preserve peace by intelligent and adequate preparation to repel aggression."

That is what Secretary Root said all those years ago. As we look forward to 2014 and a long-term relationship with the people of Afghanistan, all of our support for representative political institutions, improving the security environment, and Afghan social and economic development are intelligent and adequate preparation to repel aggression.

The next year and a half will be very consequential. If the United States works to strengthen representative institutions, bolsters the Afghan security forces, and maintains sustainable development assistance, all will pay dividends for our peace and security for years to come.

I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period of morning business with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN REAUTHORIZATION ACT of 2012

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, last month, the Senate came together and passed the Leahy-Crapo Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2012. Our legislation takes some much needed steps to help the most vulnerable victims of domestic and sexual violence, and it was passed with significant bipartisan support. The Leahy-Crapo Violence Against Women Act was an example of what we accomplish when we put politics aside and work to find real solutions to real problems facing real Americans.

Few laws have had a greater impact on the lives of women in this country than the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). By shining a light on the insidious crimes of domestic and sexual violence, this law's initial passage nearly 20 years ago sent a powerful message that violence against women would no longer be tolerated. The days of dismissing these crimes with a joke or a shrug were over. The resources, training and law enforcement tools provided by VAWA transformed the criminal justice and community-based response to abuse. It gave support and protection to the victims who for generations had been blamed, humiliated and ignored.