

I appreciate that he has come to the floor today to talk about it as well. We have had 3 years of meetings, negotiations, and broad stakeholder outreach in an effort to craft the most effective piece of energy legislation, with the greatest possible chance of passing both Chambers of Congress and being signed into law.

Shaheen-Portman is a bipartisan effort that reflects an affordable approach to boost the use of energy efficiency technologies. It will help create private sector jobs, save businesses and consumers money, reduce pollution, and make our country more energy independent. It will have a swift and measurable benefit on our economy and our environment. In the last few weeks we saw a study from experts at the American Council for an Energy Efficient Economy which found that this legislation has the potential to create 136,000 domestic jobs by 2025, all while saving consumers billions of dollars and reducing pollution.

Efficiency is the cheapest and fastest approach to reduce our energy use. Energy savings techniques and technologies lower costs and free up capital that allows businesses to expand and our economy to grow. Perhaps equally important, energy efficiency has emerged as an excellent example of a bipartisan and affordable opportunity to immediately grow our economy and improve energy security. In addition to being affordable, efficiency is widely supported because its benefits are not confined to a certain fuel source or a particular region of the country. It is clearly one of the policy areas where we really can come to a common agreement.

It is no wonder that energy efficiency legislation—Shaheen-Portman—enjoys such large and diverse support. It has received more than 250 endorsements from a wide range of businesses, environmental groups, think tanks, and trade associations, from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the National Association of Manufacturers to the Natural Resources Defense Council.

I am hopeful the Senate will return to Shaheen-Portman when we have finished debating the serious issue of Syria. I appreciate the commitment of our leadership on both sides of the aisle in the Senate to do so. I recognize this will be the first time a major energy bill has reached the Senate floor since 2007; therefore, it only makes sense for us to have a robust energy debate that allows for amendments from both sides of the aisle to be considered. I look forward to working with my colleagues to find an agreement on the way forward.

I thank my good friend Senator PORTMAN for his partnership in bringing this bill to the floor. I also thank the majority and minority leaders as well as Chairman WYDEN and Ranking Member MURKOWSKI for all of their support as we have gone through this process and hopefully will bring this bill to the floor in the next couple of weeks.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

SYRIA

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, we rise at a time of great debate here in this Chamber and in this country about what the appropriate response should be by the United States to the horrific use of chemical weapons by the Government of Syria. That is a debate which will unfold over the next days here. We will see, as the situation continues to develop, what actually comes to the floor.

But the President of the United States has asked for our input here in the Senate. Today we are focused on really the most important question an elected representative is asked to respond to; that is, whether to commit America to military combat. To that end, we have all spent time looking over intelligence reports. We have participated in classified intelligence briefings. I have also had the opportunity to meet with top members of the administration. From the information I have received, I do believe the Government of Syria used chemical weapons against its own people.

I believe an international response is appropriate, but I do not believe the administration's proposal of a U.S. military strike is the right answer. There is no guarantee it will prevent Assad's use of chemical weapons. I do not believe it will end the senseless bloodshed in Syria. I do not believe it will bring stability to the region that is so critical to our national security. I do not believe it will enhance Israel's security. I do not believe, most fundamentally, that it is nested in a broader strategic plan for the region.

The situation we face in Syria today is partly the result of a failed foreign policy. It is time for a change of course. We need a comprehensive long-term strategy first, not a strike and then the promise of a strategy, which is what the administration has proposed. "Strike first, strategy later" is a recipe for disaster. If the current resolution comes to the floor as a result, the current resolution being considered, I would not be able to support it.

ENERGY SAVINGS AND INDUSTRIAL COMPETITIVENESS ACT

Mr. PORTMAN. America must also look to its interests here at home. Senator SHAHEEN just talked about that. Without a doubt, the ongoing chaos in Syria has served to remind us once again of the volatility and the instability that has plagued the Middle East for many years. It should also serve as a wake-up call.

As a country, we have for way too long been dependent on dangerous and volatile parts of the world for our foreign energy needs, particularly foreign oil. We have seen the impact in the price of oil, even in the last couple of

weeks. We certainly have seen it in our economy, the roller coaster we have seen with energy prices up and down. As a result, the need for American energy independence is not just a matter of the economy or economic security or energy security, it is also a matter of national security.

Given these realities, it is incumbent upon us now more than ever to pursue a true "all of the above" domestic energy strategy. We have to find ways to produce more energy here at home. Just as important, we have to figure out how to use less by wasting less. We will save money, we will save energy, we will make our economy more competitive and create more jobs, and, yes, we will reduce our dependence on foreign oil.

The piece of legislation on which I joined with the senior Senator from New Hampshire, which we introduced just before we left for the August recess, takes important steps toward that goal of reducing the amount of energy we waste in this country. Senator SHAHEEN just talked about it. It is called the Energy Savings and Industrial Competitiveness Act. It was meant to be on the floor today. We were supposed to be debating it. It is absolutely critical that we are debating Syria instead, but I do hope we can take up this legislation after the discussions about what we do with regard to the situation in Syria.

This bill, the energy security bill, is bipartisan. It is bicameral in the sense that there is support in the House and the Senate for it. It is, as Senator SHAHEEN said, a bill that reduces our energy waste and moves us toward energy independence. According to the recent study she talked about, it is estimated to aid in the creation of 136,000 new jobs, saving consumers over \$13 billion a year by the year 2030. That is why it is no surprise that it is supported by such a broad group, as Senator SHAHEEN talked about. That support, by the way, is one big reason it passed the Energy Committee with a strong bipartisan vote of 19 to 3.

Simply put, the legislation we proposed makes good environmental sense, it makes good energy sense, and it makes good economic sense too. It is a rare example around here of bipartisan support, which ought to be encouraged in a number of areas, but certainly this is one where we can find common ground.

I want to thank the majority leader this morning, and the minority leader, for working out a unanimous consent agreement that allows us to move forward on this commonsense approach in the coming days. In that debate, we will talk more about the legislation, how it helps manufacturers on the global stage, and how the savings companies will accrue from energy efficiency will lead to better paying jobs. We will talk about how our legislation helps to train the next generation of workers in the skills they need to compete in the growing energy efficiency field. We will talk about how it makes

the Federal Government practice what it preaches, to reduce the waste in the largest user of energy in the world, which is our Federal Government. We will describe how our bill accomplishes these goals with no new mandates, no mandates on the private sector, no new spending, entirely offset. And again, it is a commonsense approach that is bipartisan. I look forward to that discussion. I look forward to seeing the Energy Savings and Industrial Competitiveness Act become law so this Nation can take a big step toward achieving the true goal of an “all of the above” energy strategy and indeed make us less dependent on those dangerous and volatile parts of the world.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SCHATZ). The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 191, the nomination be confirmed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table, with no intervening action or debate; that no further motions be in order to the nomination; that any related statements be printed in the RECORD; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action and the Senate then resume legislative session.

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

The nomination considered and confirmed is as follows:

TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY

Marilyn A. Brown, of Georgia, to be a Member of the Board of Directors of the Tennessee Valley Authority for a term expiring May 18, 2017.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

AUTHORIZING THE LIMITED AND SPECIFIED USE OF THE UNITED STATES ARMED FORCES AGAINST SYRIA—MOTION TO PROCEED—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to S.J. Res. 21.

Under the previous order, the time until 12 noon will be equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent that the time during the quorum calls, which I will suggest in just a few seconds, be equally divided between the majority and the minority.

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

Mr. REID. 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 the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, this week we have a very difficult set of questions to answer relating to Syria and the ongoing crisis there. But in particular we have a question to answer as it relates to what the United States should do. I rise this morning to express strong support for this authorization to degrade Bashar al-Asad's chemical weapons capability and deter the future use of these horrific weapons. I made this determination based upon the evidence and the national security interests of the United States, both our national security interests today as well as in the future.

The resolution that is before the Senate right now does not allow for the deployment of U.S. combat troops on the ground in Syria. I will not support—nor do I think there will be much support in this Chamber—any measure that would involve U.S. boots on the ground in Syria and this resolution specifically speaks to this concern. I am quoting, in part, the resolution:

The authority granted in section 2(a) does not authorize the use of the United States Armed Forces on the ground in Syria for the purpose of combat operations.

It is important we make that point.

As we have all seen, especially in the last few days, the situation in Syria is in flux, especially in the last 24 hours. The Russian Government put forth a proposal yesterday which would have international monitors take control of Syria's chemical weapons in order to avert a U.S. military strike. I am open to this diplomatic discussion—however not without caution and not without skepticism. Diplomatic solutions are always a preferred path and military strikes should always be the last resort.

I think prior to this proposal we were at this point of a last resort. But the only reason this proposal is on the table is because of the credible threat of force that is being debated in Washington—but even more significantly being debated across the country. The authorization itself should still go forward because it will keep the pressure

on the Syrian regime for a diplomatic solution.

Let's take a couple of minutes on our own national security interests. In March of 2011, as reported by the U.S. State Department, multiple news sources, including CNN, reported—and I will submit for the RECORD a report from CNN—that the Syrian Government authorities had arrested 15 schoolchildren in the city of Daraa for spray-painting antigovernment slogans. These young people were reportedly tortured while in custody and authorities resorted to force when their parents and others in the community called for their release. Within 1 week the police had killed 55 demonstrators in connection with the early efforts to provide opposition to the Asad regime. The regime committed countless atrocities during the next 2 years of this conflict, culminating in the unspeakable use—the indiscriminate use of chemical weapons on August 21.

I submit for the RECORD a report from CNN, dated March 1, 2012, and ask it be printed in the RECORD.

This report is March of 2012, but it looks back in a retrospective fashion on what happened in those early days of the opposition coming together in 2011. I will read a pertinent part, part of what CNN said about what happened when these schoolchildren were demonstrating against the regime. They talked in this report about the young people, as I mentioned, not just protesting but spray-painting their beliefs against the regime. At the time, not a lot of people around the world were focused on what was happening in Syria. Let me quote in pertinent part what at one point one of the citizens on the street was saying, that the people in Daraa:

... didn't want to go against the regime. People thought that this [leader, Mr. Asad] was better than his dad. Nobody wanted to go face-to-face with him.

But then of course it was young people, in this case even schoolchildren, who led the way to take him on. I submit this for the record because this opposition started on the streets of Syria, in this case in Daraa, starting with young people, but it of course continued from there. We know that the regime itself has the largest chemical stockpile in the region, one of the largest in the world. We know Mr. Asad used these weapons against his own people, not only on August 21 but on multiple occasions prior to that in a much more limited way. We also know he has the capacity, the will, and unfortunately the track record to use these weapons against innocent civilians.

We also should remember we have troops and other military and diplomatic personnel in the region, in the Middle East. Even Syria's acquisition—even Syria's very acquisition of chemical weapons threatens our national security. In 2003, the Congress of the United States—some people have forgotten about this—the Congress of the