small business that the small business won't be able to afford it anymore.

What Margaret's husband's employer could do, so that Margret's husband could go to the doctor even if he had major health problems to be taken care of, is if he chose to take his employees into this exchange, again, they could go to Aetna, Medical Mutual, BlueCross, or the public option. And the small business is going to get tax credits that are not available now to bring down the cost of the insurance.

Once a small business goes into a larger pool, the rates come down because small businesses and individuals always pay more than large businesses that can spread their risk to a much wider pool.

The last one I will share is from Jamie from Fairfield County:

> I am a married 40-year old mother of three sons. I am currently uninsured, but my husband is self-employed and has insurance for him and our children.
>
> The insurance companies refuse to insure me due to a preexisting condition. My condition does not require any treatment and I haven't followed up on it since my diagnosis 4 years ago.
>
> Without insurance, I am nearly 3 years overdue for my mammogram and 4 years overdue for my OB/GYN exam. I have not had any of the preventive testing that begins in your forties.
>
> My family is plagued by heart disease, cancer, and diabetes. I fear that without the opportunity for health care, I will not be able to be here for my children and my future grandchildren.
>
> I ask that you please give me a voice with those opposed to health care reform.

Jamie, from Fairfield County, a suburban county southeast of Columbus, is in a situation in which far too many people are. She needs the preventive care, but she does not get the preventive care because she cannot get insurance because she has a preexisting condition. Imagine that: You are 40 years old—people in this body, it is hard for us to be as sympathetic as we should be. We make a good income here. We have status in the community. Most Members of this body generally have pretty good health insurance, but it is pretty hard to empathize. But we need to with people such as Jamie—40 years old, preexisting condition, but she does not go to the doctor to get preventive care. She doesn't get the OB/GYN exams. She does not get the mammogram. She does not get the preventive testing a 40-year-old woman should get. What happens? At some point, she may come down with an illness, a significant, serious expensive illness that will not only compromise her health or worse, but it will mean the health care system will spend a lot more money on Jamie than it would have if she had insurance to get preventive care.

That is what is so important about this legislation. One of the things our bill does is insurance companies under our bill—the public option, Aetna, CIGNA, or any of the insurance providers, public or private—the legislation we are passing will say to them—they are charged a premium, but they can't make them pay a copay for preventive care. Nobody under our plan who goes to a doctor in the health care exchange will pay a preventive care copayment. That means more people will get mammograms, more men tested for prostate cancer, more men and women will get colonoscopies when they turn 50, women will get OB/GYN exams. All these exams will help people live longer and more prosperous lives and help prevent them from getting huge medical bills that so often lead to all kinds of bankruptcies and other financial problems.

I get hundreds of these letters a week—most of us do—from people who simply want a fair shake. With this legislation, as we know, if you have insurance and are happy with it, you can keep your insurance. We are building consumer protections around that insurance, so no more cutting people off with preexisting conditions and no more annual caps or lifetime caps if they get sick, and they can't take their insurance away, no more discrimination based on gender, age, geography, or disability. That will be in the past.

The second thing the bill does so very well is it provides insurance for people who don't have insurance, decent, affordable, high-quality insurance.

Third, it helps small businesses so they can provide insurance for their employees, because most small businesses I know, whether they are in Toledo, Youngstown, Athens, Gallipolis, Dayton, or Springfield, want to provide insurance. Most small businesses want to provide insurance to their employees, but so many can no longer afford the insurance they provided 10, 20 years ago.

The last thing our bill does is it provides a public option. That means people will have the choice. It is another choice they can make, another choice they can make if they don't want private insurance. They can go with the public option, and they will see the public option keep prices down, provide choice, and keep the insurance companies honest.

This legislation makes sense. It is time we move this legislation in the next few weeks and get it to the President's desk by Thanksgiving.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

AFGHANISTAN

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I appreciate the statement my colleague, Senator BROWN from Ohio, just made about health care. It is a critically important issue we all have been working on. He and I were fortunate to serve this summer and throughout the year, but especially this summer, working on the bill he spoke of—the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee bill.

I rise tonight to talk about another significant challenge we face as Americans; that is, the really grave challenge we face in Afghanistan.

I had the opportunity this summer toward the end of August to travel to both Afghanistan and Pakistan with Senator BROWN of Ohio and his colleague from Ohio, ZACK SPACE, a Member of the House of Representatives. They would agree with me, and I believe most Americans would agree, that when we have troops on the ground in harm's way in such an important part of the world for our security, we must have a very serious debate, a sober deliberation, an objective assessment of where we are right now.

The administration has expressed, and I support, the overall goal in Afghanistan to ensure that al-Qaida or any other terrorist group does not gain the sanctuary it requires to plot, plan, or train for another terrorist attack on American soil or against our allies.

We have seen the direct impact of an unstable Afghanistan right in my home State of Pennsylvania. Last week, I traveled to Shanksville, PA, in southwestern Pennsylvania, as the world knows now as the place where the plane went down in September of 2001. That was an unspeakable act of terrorism. Thank goodness for this Capitol and for our country that a group of brave Americans took control as best they could and made sure that plane, which was headed for Washington, did not get here. And they gave their lives in that effort. The men responsible for those attacks conducted their planning from Afghanistan, not from anywhere else. It is in our national security interest to make sure that Afghanistan today never again becomes a safe haven for the likes of Osama bin Laden or any other terrorist who may confront us in the future and continues to confront us today.

As of this week, at least 822 members of the U.S. military have died in Afghanistan, including 35 from the State of Pennsylvania. Those who gave, in Lincoln's words, ''the last full measure of devotion'' to their country, we are thinking of them and their families tonight, as we do every day.

We are also remembering those who have sacrificed time in Afghanistan in this effort and some who have been wounded, so many who have been wounded—thousands have been wounded in just this conflict itself.

We turn again to Lincoln when he talked about ''he who has borne the battle''—in the modern context of that, him or her, fighting men and women on the ground in Afghanistan, in Iraq, and other places around the world. We are thinking of them tonight, and we pray for them. But we also pray for ourselves that we may be worthy of their valor.

I know there have been a lot of reports lately and discussions about what has been happening in Afghanistan. We have seen recent reports of heavy Taliban activity across 80 percent of Afghanistan. That doesn't mean they control 80 percent, but there is a lot of activity in 80 percent. That number is up from 72 percent in November 2008

and way up from 54 percent a year before that. That is just their activity. But a substantial Taliban presence, one or more attacks per month—that is the measurement of this—was seen in another 17 percent of the country.

It is critical that we have taken measures to recalibrate our efforts in Afghanistan. General McChrystal, a great military leader, a great mind, with whom we had a chance to spend some time on our trip, was confirmed by the Senate in June to take command of NATO and U.S. operations in Afghanistan and arrived in Afghanistan a few weeks later. General McChrystal recently submitted his strategic review to the White House, and we look forward to hearing the results of that review. We need to give General McChrystal and his team an opportunity to implement his strategy and to put it into action. That has just begun over the last couple several months.

Having spent so much of the last 8 years since September 11, 2001, not focused on Afghanistan, we cannot expect results there overnight. This is why I stand in support of Chairman CARL LEVIN, the chairman of our Armed Services Committee, of his call for an expansion, a rapid expansion of the Afghan national security forces, both the Afghan National Army and the Afghan National Police. I traveled with Chairman LEVIN in May of 2008 to both countries, and I learned on that trip and many days before and after that trip of his leadership, his experience, and his understanding of the issues we confront in both Afghanistan and Pakistan and other places around the world. I believe his understanding of these issues is unparalleled. There may be some here who know as much, but few could make the case they know more. I have confidence in CARL LEVIN's assessment of where we are today and his recommendations for where we should go in the future.

In July, General McChrystal assessed that the Afghan Army could expand from 134,000 troops to about 240,000, and the police force could go from 92,000 personnel to about 160,000 personnel by 2013. Chairman LEVIN wishes to see those same numbers but on a shorter timeline, to be accomplished in 2012. So that is something we should debate here. But I think any acceleration, any strategy that gets us to a higher number of Afghan Army and Afghan national police at a faster rate is what we have to be committed to.

Because of low levels of literacy and experience, in some cases, it will take time to build a competent Afghan officer corps—the highest level of training in the Army. This will require that we use every possible resource and enhanced U.S. training capacity to get the job done. To get to those numbers will not be easy, but I believe we can do it, and so do officials in the Afghan Government. While in Afghanistan last month, I met with Defense Minister Wardak and the Interior Minister, Mr. Atmar, who both feel confident they can adequately accelerate training of these security forces.

There is a growing insistence here in the Congress and across the country that the Afghan Government begin to assume more responsibility for its own security. In my visit to Afghanistan just after the recent Afghan Presidential election, I met with President Karzai and explained that the United States does not plan an open-ended commitment to Afghanistan. The Afghan Government, whether led by Hamid Karzai or anyone else, needs to recognize the critical need to provide security, goods, and services to the Afghan people. While we certainly are committed to assistance and development, it is ultimately the responsibility of the Afghan Government—the government itself—to reform and rebuild the country. Good governance and the fight against corruption are crucial elements to garnering public support and strengthening the effort against the extremist forces in the country. An Afghan public that can trust its government not to steal from them is more likely to support this hard-fought counterinsurgency effort—the effort that General McChrystal has talked about and will continue to tell us about.

I have to be very candid, though—and I have said this publicly already in different ways—that when I asked President Karzai specific questions about what we can tell the American people about his efforts going back a number of years, including his efforts at present—on a lot of these critical questions, such as, how are you doing on delivering services to your people; how are you doing on anticorruption efforts; how are you doing on improving your governance—he had, at best, inadequate answers to those questions. I was much more impressed, candidly, by his ministers—Minister Wardak and Minister Atmar—who are charged with the responsibility for the army and the police. That is the good news, despite the bad news I just reported about President Karzai, in my judgment. It is only my opinion, but I have met with him twice and I have read a lot about him.

Our challenge in Afghanistan comes not only from a resurgent Taliban but development needs across the country. Farmers grow poppy because they can get a good rate of return and because the Taliban threatens them if they do not. Basic development projects are threatened and extorted by Taliban forces. U.S. political relationships with local officials are often tenuous, as these leaders are often the main targets of Taliban attacks—brutal attacks and threats on people's lives, on their families, and on their property.

That is one reason why the courageous work of the Provincial Reconstruction Teams—the so-called PRTs—is essential to our success. These teams, composed of able and brave personnel from USAID, the Department of State, and the Department of Agriculture, supported by the U.S. military, are on the front lines of providing security such that political and development progress can flourish in these places across Afghanistan. These teams are operating in the most difficult environments in the country, and I want to thank them for their remarkable efforts and their sacrifice in contributing to our mission. I know General McChrystal not only respects and appreciates but works closely with all of these parts of our government that are doing such a great job for us. While the enhanced presence of Afghan forces is our ultimate goal, these Provincial Reconstruction Teams are a substantial part of how we are going to get there.

This approach is comprehensive and smart, but it does require time. The courageous work performed by the PRTs, combined with an enhanced effort by the Afghan national security forces, I believe, can finally put us in a position where a stable Afghanistan is achievable.

The challenge is not limited to Afghanistan and the Obama administration has adopted the correct holistic approach to include Pakistan, the neighbor to the east of Afghanistan. We have begun to rebuild important ties with the Pakistani Government based on trust and a common understanding that extremist forces are a serious threat to the Pakistani state, and not an asset to be expended on its other national security interests. In Congress, we have also worked to ensure that our relationship with Pakistan is based on mutual trust and a commitment to build links at all levels of Pakistani and American society; among governments but also with nongovernmental organizations—academics, businessmen and businesswomen, humanitarian workers, and across the board. We have a lot of Pakistani Americans who are helping us do this. While we will also maintain our support for Pakistani's military, this new multitiered approach will be critical to building the solid foundation for a new relationship between our two countries—the United States and Pakistan.

Despite our efforts to deepen our relationship, the news from Pakistan in recent days has not been encouraging. We are happy that they took the fight into the Swat Valley and had success there. Thank goodness they did that. But when I say the recent days, I mean the last several days and weeks. Over the weekend, Pakistan's Government announced the sacking of more than 700 police working in the Khyber tribal region. These police were fired after not showing up for work because they were threatened by militant leaders in the region. This is not a new trend in Pakistan. Two years ago, hundreds of police resigned under threat from local Taliban forces in the Swat Valley. So we have to monitor this, as we do developments in Afghanistan. Without the basic security provided by the police in these volatile border areas, the

difficulty of our efforts is compounded. I hope that the Pakistani national government can do more to properly train and equip these important front-line defenses against extremist elements in Pakistan and/or the border region.

Human rights questions have been raised in recent days in news accounts. That is also a concern we have. I had the opportunity, as well as Senator BROWN and Congressman SPACE, when we were there, to visit a camp where they are taking care of those who were displaced by the fighting in the Swat Valley—so-called IDP camps, internally displaced person camps. So far, that effort has met with success, and thank goodness the Pashtun tradition in Pakistan has meant as many as 80 percent of the people displaced were taken into homes and the government and military didn't have to help them directly, not until they had to go back to their homes and their communities.

We also had a chance to meet with General Kiyani, a very strong and capable military leader, who gave us a briefing on the efforts against the Pakistani Taliban. I believe our national security—literally the safety of our families from another grievous attack here in the United States—depends on our success in South Asia. I applaud Chairman CARL LEVIN for his vision and leadership on this important issue at this critical time, and I encourage my colleagues to do the same.

We ought to have a full debate in the Senate, in the House, and across America about troop levels. We are not there yet. There has been no recommendation made by the administration beyond the 17,000 combat troops and the 4,000 trainers, but it is never too early to start an important debate about troop levels. We also should debate and continue to get more information about evaluating the progress we are making there. President Obama and his administration are committed to doing that. They have presented to the Congress a series of metrics or benchmarks—pick your word—weighing and evaluating how we are doing on our progress there. A series of tough questions has to be asked on a frequent basis. They have to be answered by the administration if Congress is going to be satisfied with our support, both military and nonmilitary.

I believe we can get this right if we debate it, if we ask tough questions and demand answers to those tough questions of the administration, of the military, and any other question that Congress and the American people want to have asked and answered.

Finally, I mentioned the great work General McChrystal and our fighting men and women are doing every day of the week across the world in places such as Afghanistan and Iraq, but let me also highlight, before I conclude, three people on the ground there who are leading our efforts on the nonmilitary side representing our State Department: General Eikenberry, a great military leader who is serving as our Ambassador to Afghanistan and who is doing great work there; Ambassador Paterson in Pakistan, who has served now in that capacity under two administrations working very hard in a difficult situation in Pakistan; and finally, Ambassador Holbrooke, who has served this country in a number of capacities, now put in charge of monitoring the work and being a constructive force in both countries—both Afghanistan and Pakistan. We are grateful for their public service, their commitment to our security, the commitment to our troops they have made, and the commitment to getting this right so the American people can have confidence in this policy going forward.

We are not there yet. We are just beginning a full debate. But I would urge our colleagues here to pay close attention and to continue to ask these questions so we can make sure that Afghanistan is stable—as we hope for Pakistan as well—so we can protect our people from another terrorist attack or the threat of that kind of an attack.

I thank the Chair. I yield the floor.

REMEMBERING OUR FALLEN SOLDIERS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, this week, an Illinois family who lost a son in Iraq will remember the anniversary of his death. Their son was 19 when he was killed in a vehicle accident in Baghdad, 1 year ago.

Thousands of American men and women have given their lives in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. They have not been the first to do so in service to our country. Sadly, we know they will likely not be the last.

How do we pay tribute to those lost who have served? The Illinois poet Archibald MacLeish asked that we remember them. In his well-known war poem, written during the depths of the Second World War, a young, dead soldier speaks. ''We were young,'' the soldier entreats. ''We have died. Remember us.''

And so we do. We remember them in our communities, in ways big and small. We remember them here on the floor of the Senate.

And we remember them when we debate issues of national security that will dramatically affect our military forces. The vote to send young Americans to war is the most serious decision any of us will make on this Senate floor. I have written notes to the families of the many Illinois servicemembers who have been killed in Afghanistan or Iraq. Every letter makes plain the burden we have placed on—and the trust we have placed in—military members and their families.

Finally, we remember them when we consider how to honor their friends in service, those in battle today and those who are fortunate to return home. Over the past years, Congress has tried to keep its promise to our troops. We have tried to provide them with the equipment and the resources they need to complete the work we have asked them to do. We have welcomed them back with new opportunities, like the educational benefits in the new GI Bill, that will help them take the next successful step in their lives. And for those who have returned home with injuries, we have worked to provide them with the best medical care available.

The young Illinois soldier who died last year has a strong family: mother, father, sister, brother, and friends. They will remember him. In this Senate, we do, too.

BURMA'S FORGOTTEN POLITICAL PRISONERS

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, I rise today to bring to my colleagues' attention a new report by Human Rights Watch entitled ''Burma's Forgotten Prisoners.''

The report offers moving and compelling stories of political activists in Burma who have put their lives and careers on the line to raise awareness about the human rights situation in their country.

In the face of threats, intimidation and beatings, they have embraced nonviolence to put pressure on the ruling military junta to respect the legitimate aspirations of the people of Burma and support a new government based on democracy, human rights, and the rule of law.

We all have been inspired by the story of Burma's most famous political prisoner, Nobel Peace Prize winner and leader of the democratic opposition, Aung San Suu Kyi.

After leading the National League for Democracy to an overwhelming win in the 1990 parliamentary election—a victory quickly annulled by the military junta—she has spent the better part of the past 19 years in prison or under house arrest.

Recently, a Burmese court sentenced her to an additional 3 years of confinement on trumped up charges of violating the terms of her house arrest.

Yet despite the regime's best efforts, it has failed to stifle her will and her call for free and democratic Burma.

And it has failed to stop her from inspiring thousands of her fellow citizens to take up her cause.

The report by Human Rights Watch reminds us that while Suu Kyi is the most well-known democracy activist, she is by no means alone. In fact, the report notes that there are now more than 2,100 political prisoners in Burma; there are 43 prisons holding political activists in Burma and 50 labor camps; and beginning in late 2008, closed Burmese courts sentenced more than 300 activists to prison terms of, in some cases, more than 100 years for speaking out against the government and forming organizations.

Among those profiled are Zargana, one of Burma's most famous comedians, actors, and human rights activists, who was arrested and sentenced to 59 years in prison for criticizing the