

I am extraordinarily proud of his service as a classmate, as a friend, as someone who admires his character, his courage, and his unstinting commitment to the soldiers he led and the Nation he served. I thank him for his great service.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Pennsylvania is recognized.

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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 today to talk about the aftermath of the elections debacle in Afghanistan.

President Hamid Karzai's first term was characterized by a cloud of corruption and mismanagement. In his speech on Tuesday, President Karzai promised to battle corruption and to build a government that includes elements of his political opposition. Our President, President Obama, said that Mr. Karzai's performance should be measured not in words but deeds. I believe this to be true, and I wish to offer some thoughts on how President Karzai can rebuild the confidence of the Afghan people as well as the international community.

I am afraid the time window for this new government will be very short, so President Karzai needs to move quickly and with resolve. We might ask, what are the markers by which we should measure the progress of this new Afghan Government? I believe there are at least five areas to review.

First: President Karzai intends to build a better legislative framework to combat corruption. This is good. But he has also said that corruption cannot be solved by replacing high-ranking officials. I could not disagree more with that assessment. With a host of government officials accused of corruption, we will not see a significant break with the past. A large part of battling corruption is removing the perception of corruption. Keeping these officials in place will only serve to fuel a commonly held perception that Mr. Karzai refuses to resolutely deal with this issue of corruption.

I echo President Obama's call for strengthening the country's anticorruption commission. The establishment of such a body is long overdue and could play a key role in rebuilding Afghanistan's trust in the legitimacy of the Karzai government. The CIA should not—should not—be cooperating with Wali Karzai. If we are serious about corruption, we should also be judged by our deeds and not our words.

There are ministries in Afghanistan that are in need of serious reform. The Interior Ministry, which oversees the police, must confront the corruption practiced by police officers on a daily basis. The Agriculture, Energy, and Private Development Ministries also require substantial reforms.

A second area to examine: President Karzai should move quickly to publicly distance himself from some of the more unsavory characters from his election campaign.

GEN Abdul Rashid Dostum, the Uzbek warlord, has been accused of terrible human rights violations for his role in detaining thousands of Taliban fighters who were suffocated in shipping containers. Mr. Karzai's Vice Presidential partner, Mr. Fahim, has been accused of drug trafficking.

I fully acknowledge and I think everyone in this body fully acknowledges that President Karzai has a difficult job of balancing a wide variety of Afghan power centers and ethnic groups. We know that. But building a foundation for his country on such dubious grounds not only calls into question his judgment but seriously endangers the prospects for sustainable reform.

Third: Karzai should keep in place those who have competently fulfilled their responsibilities.

Most noteworthy, perhaps, is the Governor of Helmand Province, Governor Mangal, who continues to struggle on the front lines against the Taliban. I had the opportunity this past August to meet Governor Mangal and to spend some time with him. He is very brave, and he is very competent. I think President Karzai should understand that the American people expect Governors to be strengthened and not undermined. Mr. Karzai should empower provincial Governors and local leaders who have proven their ability to lead. At the national level, the Health Minister has also done a commendable job, and the Education Ministry has made some important strides.

We cannot tell Karzai whom to retain or dismiss in his new government, but these personnel decisions send a very strong signal to the Afghan people and the international community of where he intends to lead the country in the short term.

Fourth: President Karzai needs to take steps to improve the election process in Afghanistan.

Systemic and widespread fraud marred the 2009 election. President Karzai should call for an inquiry into the 2009 electoral process led by experts from Afghanistan and the international community. Parliamentary elections are scheduled for next year. Without a serious investigation and an effort to address the shortcomings of the electoral system, the elections in 2010 and in the future are at risk. Without clean electoral processes in place, the Afghan people will continue to question the legitimacy of their elected leaders.

Fifth and finally: The viability and legitimacy of this new Karzai govern-

ment will be determined in large part by whom he decides to incorporate from the opposition.

While his main opponent, Abdullah, has said he will not join a unity government, there are competent people from his team who can play a constructive role in Afghanistan.

We want and need President Karzai as a reliable partner. I hope his reelection will provide the opportunity for a fresh start in Afghanistan, a start that is characterized by a commitment to good governance, political inclusion, and a realization that Afghanistan's future must be based upon the rule of law.

When I saw President Karzai in August just after the election, I implored him to confront these pressing issues and explained that the patience of the American people was not infinite—in fact, it grows shorter by the day.

The next few weeks will be pivotal. President Karzai can do so much to rebuild the confidence of the international community and the Afghan people in this short period of time. As President Obama determines our troop commitment to the Afghan theater, it must be done with a confidence in Afghanistan's decisionmakers—a confidence that frequently does not often exist today.

President Karzai cannot let his golden hour pass. It is too important to the future of Afghanistan. It is too important to the Afghan people. Finally and most critically, it is too important for the American families who have lost loved ones in Afghanistan and have relatives currently serving in Afghanistan. The sacrifice made by U.S. troops and civilians working to bring stability and a democratic future to the country cannot be overstated or undervalued. This should be the starting point for any discussion with President Karzai.

I believe he has a solemn obligation to get this right, just as we have an obligation here in the Congress to get our strategy in Afghanistan right. There won't be just one way to do that. We will get it right only by vigorous debate, only by an honest dialog of the challenges we face.

But one of the most significant challenges, in addition to the obvious security challenge as well as the developmental challenges, is this central concern we have about governance. Governance in Afghanistan starts with President Karzai. He has an opportunity to demonstrate he is committed to these reforms on corruption, on the better delivery of services to his people, but he has not done very well in a lot of those measures in the recent past. He has to prove himself first and foremost to his own people that he is serious about these reforms, but I think he also has an obligation to our government and to the international community to demonstrate that he wants to get this right.

Mr. President, I yield the floor and note the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Florida is recognized.

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

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

Mr. LEMIEUX. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

CONGRESSIONAL SPENDING

Mr. LEMIEUX. Mr. President, before I begin my remarks for today, I wish to say a few words about the tragedy that occurred yesterday at Fort Hood. I know I share the feelings of all Americans who were deeply saddened by the events of yesterday, and our thoughts and prayers go out to the families of the young men and women who were lost and who were injured in the tragic situation that occurred yesterday.

I also wish to take this opportunity to add words of appreciation to the first responders and the medical professionals who helped these men and women who were injured yesterday. It is heroes helping heroes that really shows America at its best. Our thoughts and prayers will be with all of these brave young men and women who were tragically slain yesterday, and their families.

Mr. President, the purpose for which I rise today is to talk about the spending of this Congress, something I have been doing for the last few weeks since I had the privilege to join this institution as the Senator from Florida. I have big concerns, and the more I have been here and the more I have seen over the past few weeks has given me even more concern.

Unlike American families and unlike the majority of American States, this institution spends money it doesn't have. Each day, we go more than \$4 billion in debt as we pay for programs we don't have enough money for—\$4 billion a day, the national debt grows. Additionally, we spend \$253 billion a year on interest payments. It is the fourth largest expenditure in the budget after defense, Social Security, and Medicare. So the fourth largest expenditure that we spend every year doesn't go to a new program, it doesn't go to help a person; it goes to pay for programs in the past that we couldn't afford. It took us until 1982 to go \$1 trillion in debt. Yet we are shortly coming upon nearly \$12 trillion in debt. In a matter of days, we will hit that number. More troubling still, this past year, 2009, this Congress, for its annual budget, grew a deficit of \$1.4 trillion. That is as much deficit as was accrued in the past 4 years combined.

So I plan to come to this Chamber every week and talk about the spend-

ing problem this Congress has in order to highlight this issue. It is of grave concern to me, not just as a Senator who represents 18 million people in Florida but as a father of three children—Max, Taylor, and Chase, 6, 4, and 2—and a baby on the way. My wife and I are concerned, as every parent should be, about their future. It is our obligation as parents to make sure they have better opportunities than we had. In fact, that is the American creed, that every generation ensures that its children have equal or better opportunities than the opportunities they enjoy. But I am concerned for my children and for all the children in this country that at this present rate of spending, we will not be able to ensure that they have those equal or better opportunities.

Congress is spending too much. Both sides of the aisle talk about fiscal restraint and fiscal discipline, and yet we keep spending more than we have. This government took in \$2.1 trillion in revenues this year; yet we spent \$3.5 trillion.

I am not used to this system because, as you know, I come from a State system, where I served as a chief of staff to a Governor. In Florida, we have to balance our budget. Every year we looked at the receipts. We anxiously looked, almost on a monthly basis, to see how much money was coming in to determine how much could be spent, or what kind of tax breaks could be given back to the people, or how much could be put in the reserves. Those were the good times. As the economy declined, we watched the money and made decisions about how much we were going to have to cut. At the end of the day, we had to balance the budget.

Congress doesn't do that. Congress spends more than it takes in, and it puts those obligations on our children and grandchildren who some day will have to pay off this debt. But the time to make tough choices should not be tomorrow; the time to make tough choices is today.

One of the first pieces of legislation I had an opportunity to consider and to vote on was an appropriations bill for housing, urban development, and transportation—important issues for this country. In the opportunity to consider that appropriations bill, this Congress could have cut spending or increased the deficit. Well, it chose to increase the deficit, and the increase was by more than 23 percent over last year's budget, in a time when we are spending much more than we have. In a time when we are about to have a \$12 trillion national debt, we decided to spend 23 percent more than we did last year. What did we spend the money on? Certainly, plenty of good things. Obviously, transportation and housing are important. But we spent money on a lot of questionable things, too. We built transportation museums—monuments to roads we have not yet built. We put up congratulatory signs, saying this is how we spent money on a road, and we funded airports with no planes,

as the number of Americans losing their jobs has now risen to a 10.2-percent national unemployment level.

We are spending \$700 million a day to pay the interest on the debt, and we are funding transportation museums. If we would have stayed at the spending level from last year and cut out these extraneous programs, congratulatory signs that tell us we built a road, transportation museums, and other spending programs—which some amendments sought to cut, but they did not pass—we would have saved \$12.7 billion. In Washington, \$12.7 billion doesn't sound like a lot of money. We talk about trillions of dollars here. But \$12.7 billion could have done a lot of good.

What could we have spent that money on? I think it is important to realize that every time we spend a dollar, we are making a choice. It is a choice about how we are going to direct this country's future. We can either return that dollar and not spend it, give it back to the people who paid it, or we could not spend it and not increase our debt and put that on our children's backs, or we could have spent it on something different and maybe better.

Here is an example: One thing I applaud the administration for in their stimulus program is they have \$8 billion set aside for high-speed rail. That is exactly the kind of thing this country should undertake. The Federal Government should not do much, but they can do things that communities and States cannot often do for themselves. High-speed rail is such a national-sized project, in my opinion, that the role of the Federal Government is there. It makes sense in this difficult economic time, because you will actually create thousands of jobs by building the high-speed rail. Once it is built, you will have a long-term gain, because that high-speed rail will be there to promote infrastructure, to promote jobs, and to ease the burdens on our everyday lives. There is \$8 billion in the Federal budget this year that States can apply for to build high-speed rail. My State has an application in, along with 40 other States. We are seeking \$2.5 billion to connect Orlando to Tampa, which would be fantastic for our State. I hope our State gets those dollars. But there is only \$8 billion to apply for, and there are 40 States that want the money. Imagine if we would have taken the \$12.7 billion we wasted here and put it into that program; maybe more States could have had high-speed rail.

Let me give another example. What can you do with \$12.7 billion? With \$12 billion, you could put 427,000 college students through a 4-year college. We have to realize every time we spend a dollar, it is a choice. That dollar could have been spent better, or it could have been returned to the people.

President Obama recommended in this appropriations bill that we cut \$211 million out of it. I don't think that